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LESSONS

ON THE

PARABLES OF THE SAVIOUR,

FOR

SUNDAY SCHOOLS AND FAMILIES.

Frederick D. Huntington

"Precepts and rules are repulsive to a child, but happy illustration winneth him ;
Dimly will he think of his soul till the acorn and chrysalis have taught him ;
Parables shall charm his heart while doctrines seem dead mystery ;
Faith shall he learn of the husbandman casting good corn into the soil ;
And if thou train him to trust thee, he will not withhold his reliance from the
Lord."

Proverbial Philosophy.

BOSTON:

WILLIAM CROSBY AND H. P. NICHOLS,
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NOTE.

THIS work was commenced in an endeavour, on the part of the author, to render some assistance to the teachers of the Sunday School connected with the Society of which he is minister, and to them, his assistants, it is affectionately inscribed. It is printed with the hope that it may be useful not only to them, but, if possible, in a wider circle.

The leading design that has directed the preparation of the volume has been to provide a text-book of instruction for the young, corresponding, in its spiritual tone and simply Christian aim, with those teachings which, it is believed, are at present addressed to the grown persons of our congregations by sincere and earnest men. It is the confident belief of the writer, that a deep wrong is done to children when they are treated as incapable of grasping the great points of spiritual doctrine revealed in the New Testament, and are put off with the external matters of geography, history, or passages committed to a verbal memory ; — as if *to be Christians* were something that they must wait for, as an attainment of later years.

My main object, therefore, has been to apply the practical doctrines of Christ, illustrated as they are with peculiar power in his parables, — Repentance, Trust, Purity, Fidelity, Self-control, Truthfulness, Justice, Mercy, Devotion, Love, — to apply these, with all possible simplicity, to the hearts of the young. Subordinate to this, the purpose has been twofold: first, to transfer the learner, as completely as might be, into the scenes and customs amidst which these parables were actually spoken by Jesus; and secondly, to bring the sacred influence of the parables into the familiar sphere where the scholars are daily living, into their homes, their employments, and their pleasures. On the one hand, I have thus sought to throw light on the *original* force and meaning of these beautiful passages, and on the other, to secure a direct application of them to *present* duties.

F. D. H.

Wm. Luntz

DIRECTIONS.

I would remind the teacher of the importance of calling the attention of pupils to the *order* of the Parables. They are arranged here in the order in which they are supposed to have been uttered, according to Dr. Carpenter's Harmony. That system is adopted in the excellent text-books of Rev. J. Allen, and Rev. T. B. Fox, which, it is presumed, are already in use wherever this work will go. Any change of place or of time in passing from one parable to another I have generally pointed out by a question relating to it. If this subject were kept in view, especially with the assistance of such a book as Mr. Fox's "*Ministry of Jesus*," or Dr. Ware's "*Life of the Saviour*," and with a map of Palestine to mark the journeys, something might be done towards clearing up that confusion that exists in the conceptions of many persons concerning the progress of events in the life of Jesus, even after they have reached, in other respects, a tolerably clear understanding of the Gospels.

When an answer is long, and consists in the enumeration of several particulars, it may be easily given in parts by

two or more scholars. So, also, in reciting or reading the parable that constitutes the lesson.

Some important questions are repeated in different parts of the volume, and the teacher will find it well to repeat many others, in the way of a review.

When a paraphrase, or explanation of an expression, is given, the expression itself should always be repeated in connection with it.

A careful attention to Lesson II., accompanied by explanations from the teacher, is especially recommended.

Many of the Lessons will probably be found too long for a single exercise. I have thought it best, however, not to break the unity by a formal division, but rather to leave the teacher to separate the examination of each parable according to his own judgment.

In short, it is very far from being my desire that either the teacher or the pupil should adopt, in the class, precisely the language that I have set down in these pages. I would guide the thought, and not dictate words. Clauses are frequently thrown into the interrogatories that are intended entirely as suggestions to the teacher. Every intelligent teacher will no doubt find many things to be omitted, and many things to be enlarged upon. And every faithful one will not be satisfied that his scholars should literally repeat what I have written, but will encourage them to use these forms of expression only as helps, while they frame their own replies.

LESSONS ON THE PARABLES.

LESSON I.

ON PARABLES, AS USED IN THE TEACHINGS OF JESUS CHRIST.

Q. What is a Parable ?

A. It is a story, or fable, told for the purpose of teaching some truth.

Q. Are the things that are related in parables things that have really happened just as they are told there ?

A. They are not ; the speaker or writer only *imagines* them to have happened.

Q. Are the persons who are spoken of in parables *real* persons ?

A. They are not ; they exist only in the imagination or the thoughts, and therefore may be called imaginary persons.

Q. Is there any falsehood in thus relating things that never took place, and the actions of persons that never lived ?

A. There is not, because it is always well understood by those that hear or read the parable that it was not intended to represent *facts*, but was meant as a fiction.

Q. What would make a parable a falsehood ?

A. If the speaker or writer had any intention to deceive others, and to make them believe something that is not true, then he would be guilty of a falsehood.

Q. What, then, may a parable be said to be ?

A. An indirect way of inculcating an important lesson, or teaching truth by a fiction.

Q. What other name may be given to a parable ?

A. It may be called an allegory, and sometimes it is only a comparison of one thing with another, for the sake of illustrating it, or making its meaning more plain.

Q. Suppose you wished to show some one how much better it is to be kind than to be selfish, how might you attempt to do it ?

A. I might simply say that it is better to be kind than to be selfish.

Q. But would this be sure to make an impression, and be remembered ?

A. It would not.

Q. How then might you make this important truth more striking and impressive ?

A. I might use my imagination, and tell a story of two children, one of whom should be kind and the

other selfish ; I might give them names, and speak of them just as if they were real children ; I might fancy a place for them to live in, and describe that, and then I might go on to show how much more noble, useful, and happy the kind child would be than the selfish one. This would be a parable ; and I should show by it how much better kindness is than selfishness.

Q. Is it always mentioned, at the beginning or the end of a parable, what moral lesson it is designed to teach ?

A. It is not ; very often the occasion when it is spoken, or some circumstances about it, will help the hearer to make out very clearly what the right application of it is.

Q. Is this way of teaching much used now ?

A. It is not, though among some nations it is more common than among us.

Q. What nations have been particularly fond of this mode of speaking ?

A. The nations of Eastern countries, and especially those of that part of Asia where the Jews lived, and where the Bible was mostly written.

Q. When a piece of writing contains a great many comparisons, figures, and images, what do you call it ?

A. Poetical, because poetry abounds in such figures and comparisons ; or imaginative, because the imagination of the writer is so lively in drawing these

comparisons, and pointing out the resemblance between one thing and another.

Q. What, now, was the reason that those people among whom the Bible was written were so much in the habit of using parables and other figures of speech ?

A. They had naturally very poetical and imaginative minds.

Q. What are some of the parables of the Old Testament ?

A. There is one recorded in Judges ix., which was spoken by Jotham ; another in 2 Sam. xii., which was spoken by David ; another is in the eighteenth Psalm.

Q. Whom were almost all the parables recorded in the New Testament spoken by ?

A. By the Saviour, who included them in his discourses, with precepts, and other instructions.

Q. What was his object in delivering so many parables ?

A. To make his followers feel the importance of their various duties to God and to their fellow-men.

Q. As we read these parables even now, more than eighteen hundred years after they were first delivered, how do they still seem to us ?

A. Very beautiful and very interesting.

Q. How does Jesus make spiritual realities and duties simple and easy to our understanding ?

A. He compares them, in these parables, to common

objects, — objects that we are familiar with, and can see, or hear, or taste, or touch.

Q. What shall we find, as we go on, to be some of the natural objects that are compared by Christ to spiritual things ?

A. Grain, sheep, a candle, a pearl ; he compares goodness to mustard-seed, a sinful man to a tree with bad fruit and to thorns and thistles, and also good men to trees with good fruit.

Q. What is one peculiarity of the parables of the Saviour ?

A. These stories are remarkably natural in themselves ; that is, they relate things which are likely to happen, and have nothing strange or marvellous in them.

Q. What is another peculiarity about them ?

A. Generally each parable relates to something that took place at the time when it was spoken, or to some object that was in sight at the moment. (The teacher may show this by Matt. xvi. 5, 6 ; v. 14, 15 ; vi. 26, 28 ; Luke xi. 1–9.)

Q. How do these parables of the Saviour illustrate his benevolence ?

A. He longed to make his followers and all mankind feel the truth that God had given him to declare, because he knew that it would make them pure, and holy, and happy ; and he spoke it in parables, because he knew that in that simple and engaging form it would be most likely to reach their hearts.

Q. What should you always seek first, when you read or study a parable ?

A. To find out exactly what duty, or what religious lesson, Jesus intended to teach by that parable.

Q. What should you next endeavour to do ?

A. To apply this lesson, whatever it is, to my own heart and my own conduct, so as to be made better by it.

Q. If you do this sincerely and earnestly, what may you always hope for as your reward ?

A. I shall find my reward in the improvement of my own character, in the delightful feeling that I have done right, and in being sure that I have pleased my Heavenly Father.



LESSON II.

ON THE BOOKS IN WHICH THE PARABLES OF THE SAVIOUR ARE RECORDED.

Q. If you had been among those first disciples of the Saviour, who heard his gracious words and witnessed his holy example, what desire should you naturally have felt, after he was put to death by his enemies, and had ascended from the world ?

A. A desire to have some account of his wonderful teachings and actions written down and preserved.

Q. Does this desire seem to have been felt by those who were actually the companions and disciples of Christ in his earthly life ?

A. It does ; for we find that four of them did write such accounts of their Master's life, and their four books have been placed one after another in the Bible.

Q. Who were these four disciples of Christ ?

A. Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John.

Q. Where do you find the names of the twelve men that Jesus chose to be his disciples ?

A. In Matt. x. and Luke vi.

Q. What is the meaning of the word " disciples " ?

A. It means *learners*, and it is applied to these twelve because they were peculiarly called to be sincere, humble, and faithful learners of Christ their Master.

Q. What other name is given by Jesus, in these passages, to the " twelve " ?

A. He calls them " apostles."

Q. Why does he call them " apostles " ?

A. The word *apostle* signifies a *messenger*, or a *person sent forth* ; and it was given by Jesus to these twelve, because he sent them forth to teach his religion to mankind.

Q. Which of the four disciples mentioned above, as having written histories or biographies of Jesus, belonged to the company of these twelve apostles ?

A. Matthew and John.

Q. What name is often given to these four books ?

A. They are named the *Four Gospels*.

Q. Why are they named so ?

A. Because each one of them contains a *gospel*, that is, a record of that divine revelation of religious truth which God made to the world, through the life and words of Jesus Christ.

Q. What does the writer of each of them do ?

A. He gives a faithful narrative of what was said and done by the Saviour, during his ministry in Judea.

Q. How are these four Gospels commonly designated ?

A. By the names of the writers ; as, the *Gospel by Matthew*, or *according to Matthew*, or Mark, or Luke, or John.

Q. In what other sense is the word *gospel* used ?

A. It is often used without any reference to these particular writings, and to signify, in general, that whole revelation of spiritual truth, and of God's fatherly love and mercy, that came through Christ. See Acts xx. 24 ; Eph. i. 13.

Q. What is the difference between these two meanings ?

A. In the latter case, the *doctrine* or *message* itself is intended ; in the other, the *written account* of that message, the *record* of that doctrine, is intended.

Q. What are the writers of these four Gospels called ?

A. Evangelists.

Q. Why are they called so ?

A. From the word *evangel*, which means *gospel*.

Q. What is the original meaning of *evangel*, or of the word in the Greek language from which it is derived?

A. A message of *good news*, or *glad tidings*.

Q. Why is this an appropriate name for the gospel?

A. It is *glad tidings*, because it shows us how to escape from sin and misery, how to be holy and happy; and it promises forgiveness from our Father in heaven when we repent.

Q. What language were these books written in?

A. It is supposed that Mark, Luke, and John wrote theirs in the Greek, and that Matthew wrote his in a certain dialect of the Hebrew.

Q. When and where were they all translated into English, as we now have them?

A. More than two hundred years ago, in the time of King James the First, in England.

Q. For what reasons are we to regard these books as accurate and trustworthy?

A. They were written by honest and good men; they were written within a few years after Christ was put to death, and while the events they describe were fresh in their memory; and they were received as correct by the men of their own time, who were acquainted with all the circumstances.

Q. What worthy tribute has been paid to these accounts by all generations since they were written?

A. While other false records have perished, these

have been preserved, revered, and studied with delight, by Christian persons in all ages.

Q. Ought we not to be especially thankful that we have more than one such account ?

A. We ought ; for what was omitted by one or more of these writers, we find mentioned by another ; and every thing that Jesus did or said is unspeakably valuable to us all.

Q. How is it known that these writers did not copy what they wrote from one another ?

A. Because in some small and unimportant things their accounts do not exactly agree, as they would if they copied from each other's productions, or all from a common work.

Q. Do they all agree in important and essential things respecting the life and teachings of the Saviour ?

A. They do.

Q. What excellent means had they for knowing the *truth* concerning the matters that they described ?

A. Matthew and John were companions of the Saviour, seeing what he did and hearing what he said ; while Mark and Luke were intimately acquainted with those who were his companions and disciples ; so that in either case their information was direct and exact.

Q. Do these writers thrust into their books their own opinions, or comments, or guesses, or any commendation of their Master ?

A. They do not ; but with a dignified simplicity which makes us believe they were sincere and true, they show us the Son of God, and give us his own words and deeds.

Q. Did these writers always put down the events just in the order in which they happened ?

A. They did not ; but that order has been pretty clearly made out by scholars who have compared their accounts together.

Q. Where are you told who Matthew (or "Levi," his other name) was, and how he was led to attach himself to Jesus ?

A. In his own Gospel, ix. 9 ; and in other places he is mentioned among the other apostles.

Q. Who was Mark, the author of the second Gospel ?

A. Mark, or "John Mark," or "Marcus," as his name is sometimes written, was the son of a pious woman living at Jerusalem, a companion and friend of Peter, Paul, and Barnabas, disciples of our Lord. See Acts xii. 12, 25 ; 1 Pet. v. 13 ; 2 Tim. iv. 11 ; Col. iv. 10 ; Acts xiii. 5, 13.

Q. Who was Luke, the author of the third Gospel ?

A. He seems to have been a fellow-traveller with Paul, a friend of other disciples, a physician, and a devout Christian. He wrote also the Acts of the Apostles. See Col. iv. 14 ; 2 Tim. iv. 11. Compare Acts i. 1, and his Gospel, i. 3.

Q. Who was John, the author of the fourth Gospel ?

A. The "beloved disciple" of Jesus, the son of

Zebedee, a fisherman on the Lake of Galilee, and probably near to the Saviour during his ministry. See Mark i. 19, 20 ; Matt. iv. 21 ; John xiii. 23 ; Acts iii. 1, 11.

Q. Where are these four Evangelists supposed to have written their Gospels ?

A. Matthew in Judea ; Mark at Rome ; Luke in Greece ; and John at Ephesus, in Asia Minor.

Q. Shall we find all the parables of the Saviour recorded by each one of these Evangelists ?

A. We shall not ; for these, like his other instructions, are written in part by one and in part by another ; but from the four we may collect them all, and arrange them in order.



LESSON III. ?

PARABLE OF THE DISEASED AND SINGLE EYE.

Q. Where do you find the parable of the diseased and single eye recorded ?

A. In the Gospel written by Matthew, chap. vi., verses 22 and 23.

Q. Will you repeat those verses ?

A. —.

Q. Does either of the other Evangelists relate to us these words of the Saviour ?

A. Luke relates them in chap. xi., from verse 33 to verse 36, of his Gospel, with a few verbal differences.

Q. What do you mean by "Evangelists" ?

A. (See one of the answers in the preceding Lesson.)

Q. What do you mean by "verbal differences" ?

A. That some of the words used by Luke, in his account of this parable, are different from the words used by Matthew, while the sense, or meaning, is substantially the same.

Q. In the midst of what discourse did Christ utter this parable ?

A. In his Sermon on the Mount.

Q. What is the Sermon on the Mount ?

A. It is that address, or sermon, spoken by Christ to his followers, in which he sets forth some of the great principles and most important truths which God sent him into the world to teach.

Q. Would not a person who should live according to the directions given in this sermon be a very excellent character ?

A. He would be ; such a person as Christ would approve, and our Heavenly Father would love.

Q. What ought we, then, to do, respecting that sermon ?

A. We ought to study it carefully, and try earnestly and continually to practise all its beautiful instructions.

Q. Why is it called the Sermon *on the Mount* ?

A. Because Christ stood on a mount, or elevation of land, when he delivered it to the multitudes, who were on the side of the hill.

Q. Where is this mountain ?

A. It is near Capernaum, in Galilee.

Q. What and where is Capernaum ?

A. It is a city, near the northern extremity of the Sea of Galilee. (See Map of Palestine.)

Q. Will you point out, on the map, the direction of this city from Nazareth, where Jesus had been brought up ? (See Matt. ii. 23, and iii. 13.)

A. —.

Q. Will you point out nearly the place where Jesus delivered the Sermon on the Mount, and its direction from Bethlehem, where he was born ? (Matt. ii. 1.)

A. —.

Q. How do we know that Jesus was in this place at this time ?

A. By turning to Matthew, chap. v., verse 1, where the Sermon on the Mount commences, and comparing that verse with Matt. ii., verses 13, 18, and 23.

Q. Looking now at the parable itself, — what does the Saviour mean when he says, “ The light of the body is the eye ” ?

A. He means that it is through our eyes that light enters the body ; that it is only by means of the eye that we discern the light and see all outward

objects, while without the eye we should be in darkness and see nothing. The eye is to the body what a candle is to a room in the night.

Q. How do you understand the phrase, "If thine eye be *single*"?

A. It means, "If thine eye be *clear, pure, in a healthy state*, so as to perceive objects distinctly, without any blur or dimness."

Q. With such eyes, what will be the result?

A. "The whole body shall be full of light"; that is, light will be transmitted *clearly*; the vision will be perfect.

Q. What is meant by the next expression, — "If thine eye be evil"?

A. "If thine eye is *diseased, or blinded*."

Q. If the eye is in this state, what will be the consequence?

A. All will be dark; nothing can be seen, — neither the light of sun, nor moon, nor stars, nor any thing around us.

Q. What is the meaning of the remainder of verse 23?

A. Jesus exclaims, "If the eye, which is the only organ or avenue by which light can enter the body, is closed up or blind, in what darkness must we then live!"

Q. Will you now turn to Luke's account of the same passage in our Lord's instructions, and see how it teaches precisely the same thing?

A. (See Luke xi. 33, and three verses following.)

Q. What is taught in verse 33 of this chapter in Luke, which is not found in connection with this parable in Matthew, but which is found in Matt. v. 15 ?

A. That we ought not to cover up the light of knowledge and goodness ; for that would be like hiding a candle under any close vessel, as a bushel ; but that we should act so that the truth may shine forth in our good example, as the beams of a candle on a candlestick shine far around it.

Q. Will you state what you suppose Jesus intended to teach by this parable ?

A. He probably intended to convey some *spiritual truth*, and not merely to say, that unless the bodily eye is in a sound condition we cannot see.

Q. What is that spiritual truth ?

A. He teaches us that our minds must be kept pure.

Q. Why must they be kept pure ?

A. Because if they are not, they cannot receive the light of his truth any more than a diseased eye can receive the light of the sun.

Q. What must we strive to keep our minds pure from ?

A. From all sinful thoughts, and wrong desires, and base passions.

Q. What are some of the things that corrupt the mind ?

A. Selfishness corrupts it ; so does intemperance ,

so does the love of money ; so do anger, and envy, and falsehood.

Q. What effect do these things have on our spiritual natures, — our souls ?

A. They hinder our souls from growing in wisdom, benevolence, justice, charity, or in any Christian virtue.

Q. How can they be said to make our souls “ blind ” ?

A. They so engross our thoughts with earthly things that we are *blind* to duty and excellence, and *do not see* the beauty of being good, nor the happiness of loving and serving God.

Q. What particular sin had Jesus in his view, probably, when he spoke this parable ?

A. Worldly-mindedness, or loving the pleasures, and luxuries, and comforts of this life more than our Father in heaven.

Q. What reason is there for supposing that Christ alluded particularly to this sin ?

A. In the preceding passage he had just been speaking of the importance of having our treasures laid up in heaven, and not on the earth. (See verses 19, 20, and 21.)

Q. What does this mean ?

A. That we should prize things that cannot perish, such as goodness, kindness, purity, meekness, truth, as far more precious than silver or gold, houses or lands, amusements or dress, food or drink.

Q. How does a worldly spirit blind our souls ?

A. It makes us satisfied with our present pleasures, and turns off our thoughts and affections from nobler subjects.

Q. What will become of those pleasures that are earthly, and that depend on our bodies ?

A. They will vanish when our bodies die.

Q. How will it be with that spiritual happiness that comes from doing right ?

A. That is much grander and deeper in itself, and it will remain with us for ever in heaven.

Q. Should we not be as anxious to have our spiritual discernment good, as our bodily eyesight ?

A. We should ; because the things that we see with our souls are greater and better than the things that we see with our eyes.

Q. How then may we keep the vision of our souls "single," or "clear," so that we may understand the truth ?

A. By shunning vice and sin ; by obeying our consciences ; by being just ; by speaking the truth ; by being generous ; by praying to God.

Q. What great motive have we for keeping our hearts so pure ?

A. The purer and better our hearts are, the more of Christ's truth shall we understand, the more like Christ shall we be, and the more will our Heavenly Father love us ?

Q. What other passage in the Sermon on the Mount does this parable remind you of ?

A. Verses 3, 4, and 5 of chap. vii.

Q Will you read them and explain them ?

A. The eye is there compared to the soul ; and Jesus teaches that we are very apt to discover and talk about other persons' faults, but forget our own ; just as those who have great defects or " beams " in their own eyes are ready to reproach those who have only " motes " or little splinters in theirs.

LESSON IV.

PARABLE OF THE BIRDS AND THE LILIES OF THE FIELD.

Q. Where do you find the passage containing the parable of the birds and the lilies ?

A. In the Gospel written by Matthew, chap. vi., from verse 26 to the close ; and in the Gospel by Luke, chap. xii., from verse 22 to verse 30.

Q. Of what discourse does it form a part ?

A. It is a part of Christ's Sermon on the Mount ?

Q. Will you repeat this parable, as it is in Matthew ?

A. —.

Q. What is Jesus teaching us here ?

A. That we ought to be more anxious to be good, than to be well dressed, or to have delicate food.

Q. In order to see how Christ introduces this passage, and to find the course of thought that led him to it, will you look back, and read verses 24 and 25 ?

A. —.

Q. What is the *Mammon* spoken of in verse 24 ?

A. Riches, or worldly gain.

Q. If one should love money more than his Maker, what might be said of him ?

A. That money, or wealth, is his God, and that he worships a money-god, or Mammon.

Q. Is not a person who loves pleasure more than duty an idolater ?

A. In one sense he is so, as much as if he offered his worship to a carved image of wood or stone, or to the sun or stars ; for he is devoted to earthly things more than to God.

Q. What is one way in which young persons show this bad spirit ?

A. If they would rather do wrong than to give up a social party, or resign some favorite plan of pleasure, then they love Mammon more than God.

Q. What is meant when it is said, " Ye cannot serve God and Mammon " ?

A. That we cannot love both God and earthly things equally ; that we must either love God more than worldly convenience and pleasure, and thus be good, or we shall certainly love worldly things more than God, and thus be wicked.

Q. Is there any such thing possible as your being neither good nor wicked ?

A. There is not ; I must be either the one or the other.

Q. Where are you told which of these you ought to be ?

A. I am told by my own conscience, as well as in the Bible.

Q. Does not Jesus tell you which you ought to be, in this very passage ?

A. He does, in verse 25.

Q. What do you understand by that verse ?

A. That when I am thinking of what is really important in my life, I should esteem what I eat, and drink, and wear, and all my outward possessions, as of much less value than my religious character.

Q. Why is this ?

A. Because "meat," or food, and "raiment," or clothing, belong wholly to my body, which is to die and decay ; but goodness and truth belong to my spiritual part, my soul, which is to live for ever.

Q. When it is said, "Take no thought," &c., is it intended that we should not provide *any* support for our bodies and for our friends ?

A. It is not, for the Bible teaches us that we ought to labor and earn our living industriously.

Q. Will you mention some passages where this is said ?

A. Eph. iv. 28 ; Rom. xii. 11 ; 1 Tim. v. 8 ; Exod. xx. 9.

Q. How are you to make this labor innocent, and guard against becoming excessively attached to your gains?

A. By always working in a religious spirit, in the fear of God, and always preferring what is right to any selfish enjoyment.

Q. Will you read verse 26, and tell what you understand by it?

A. That if God keeps the birds of the air alive, and provides for them while they do not lay up stores for themselves, we may be sure he will take care of us, who have foresight and reason, and hands to work with.

Q. What is meant by the expression, "Are ye not much *better* than they?"

A. Christ means that every human being must be of more worth in the sight of God than a bird can be.

Q. Why is this so?

A. Because every man, woman, and child has an immortal soul, a conscience, reason, powers of thought and speech.

Q. How is the dignity of a human being set forth in the Bible?

A. He is represented as being made "in the image of God," as being "but little lower than the angels," as the chief of all God's creatures on the earth.

Q. If God has exalted us so highly in our nature, what ought we to do?

A. We ought to live worthily of such a privilege, to preserve our innocence, and to remember what a terrible thing it is to pollute such a nature with any sin.

Q. How do you suppose Jesus happened to compare men with the birds, in this place ?

A. It is very probable, that, as he was delivering this discourse on a mountain, in the open air, he saw birds flying near him, and pointed to them as he spoke.

Q. What would he teach us by this comparison ?

A. That we should feel our dependence on God for every thing, and not be over anxious about the future events of life.

Q. How does he continue this sentiment in verse 27 ?

A. He reminds us that we cannot increase our own stature, or prolong our own life, in the least ; that it is God alone who makes us live and grow ; and that, do what we will, we have not power to make ourselves one cubit taller, or one moment younger, than we are.

Q. How much is a cubit ?

A. It was a measure used by the Jews, in the time of Christ, of about one foot and a half in length.

Q. Many persons show a great deal of attention and care about dress ; what does Jesus say to them, in verse 28 ?

A. That they should learn, from the fact that God makes the lilies so beautiful, that it is really his

power and love, and not their own wisdom, that supplies them with clothing.

Q. Is it not likely that this mention of lilies was suggested to Jesus as he was speaking, as that of the birds was ?

A. It is ; and that he saw, where he stood, an abundance of these splendid flowers, which are very beautiful in that country, covering the fields around him.

Q. Why does he say that Solomon, in his magnificent robes, was not arrayed, or dressed so richly, as a simple lily ?

A. To show that the utmost skill of man is inferior to the wonderful workmanship of God, who creates and colors the flowers.

Q. Why does he select Solomon in particular ?

A. Because Solomon was once the king of this same Jewish people, and was distinguished for his riches, living in a brilliant palace of gold, and ivory, and precious wood.

Q. Where can you find an account of Solomon and his great wealth ?

A. In 2 Chronicles, chap. ix.

Q. How ought it to affect us to see, that, after all his pains and expenditures, such a monarch is less glorious in his outward appearance than a simple and pure lily ?

A. It should teach us to regard our outward appearance as of far less consequence than good dispositions within the heart.

Q. What else should it teach us ?

A. What is said in verse 30, — that if God takes such excellent care of even the little flowers and the grass, as well as of great worlds and nations, he will also remember us, whom he loves as his children.

Q. Will you explain the expression, “ Which to-day is, and to-morrow is cast into the oven ” ?

A. Jesus represents this grass as being so frail, that while it stands green and flourishing one day, the next day it may be cut down for fuel to heat ovens.

Q. If what is so frail is adorned and beautified by God, what should we feel respecting our own lot in life ?

A. That every thing which we really need will be given us from above.

Q. From this whole passage, what is the chief lesson you should learn ?

A. To trust entirely in the goodness of God, my Heavenly Father.

Q. When you find yourself feeling anxious about the future, what should you call to mind ?

A. The words in verse 34, bidding me let every day bring its own cares, and not to borrow trouble in advance.

Q. When you find any of your worldly plans perplexing you, what precept should you remember ?

A. That one in verse 33, where I am told that I must seek first after righteousness, and to do the will of

God, as more important than any thing else can possibly be.

Q. When you are disposed to be vain of your personal appearance, what should extinguish your pride ?

A. The thought, that after all I am less beautiful than many things out in the fields of nature ; and therefore I should be humble and modest.

Q. Seeing that you are allowed by Jesus to put your trust and confidence in your Heavenly Father, and know that he is your friend, what should you do in return ?

A. I should daily thank him, with all my heart, that he does take such kind care of me and of all my friends ; and I should labor and pray, both to do what he commands me, and to bear, patiently and cheerfully, whatever he sends upon me.



LESSON V.

PARABLE OF THE TREES.

Q. When did Jesus speak the parable of the trees ?

A. Immediately after he had put forth the parable we studied in the last Lesson.

Q. In the midst of what address, or sermon, did he utter this parable ?

A. In his Sermon on the Mount.

Q. What is the Sermon on the Mount ?

A. (See answer in the Lesson on the Parable of the Diseased and Single Eye.)

Q. Where was Jesus when he delivered this sermon ?

A. (See answers in the Lesson on the Parable of the Diseased and Single Eye.)

Q. Where do you find this parable of the trees ?

A. In the Gospel by Matthew, chap. vii., from verse 16 to 20.

Q. Where does Luke record the same parable ?

A. In chap. vi. of his Gospel, verses 43 and 44.

Q. Will you repeat the parable, as it stands in either of these Gospels ?

A. —.

Q. What does Jesus mean by the *prophets*, of whom he tells his followers to beware ?

A. He means *religious teachers* ; the word *prophets* often has this meaning in the Scriptures.

Q. Whom does he mean by "*false prophets*" ?

A. He means religious teachers who are not sincere, who do not believe what they pretend to believe, nor practise what they teach. These are false, deceitful, and hence we are to "*beware*" of them.

Q. Why does he say such teachers come in "*sheep's clothing*" ?

A. Because the outside appearance which they put on is often very innocent and meek.

Q. Why does he compare their appearance to that of the sheep ?

A. Because the sheep is so meek and harmless.

Q. Why does he speak of this appearance as "clothing"?

A. Because the outward appearance and manner of a person, when compared with his real character, is like what the clothing is compared with the body.

Q. What do you call a person who tries to *appear* better than he really is?

A. A hypocrite.

Q. Is not this just what Christ means by those who "come in sheep's clothing, but inwardly are ravening wolves"?

A. It is.

Q. Why does he use the expression, "inwardly they are *ravening wolves*"?

A. Because wolves are so different from sheep, the latter being gentle and innocent, while the former are fierce, "ravening," that is, devouring.

Q. Will you now apply this comparison to hypocritical characters?

A. They may be simple and gentle in their *appearance*, as sheep; but within their hearts there are passions, and appetites, and bad feelings, that are as fierce and coarse as wolves.

Q. Does not this description apply to others besides *religious teachers*, or *prophets*?

A. It does; children, as well as men and women, are sometimes insincere, false, and hypocritical.

Q. When are they so ?

A. When they try to pass themselves off as better than they are.

Q. Will you give some example of this ?

A. Children that attempt to get praise for generosity when they are selfish, or for industry when they are idle, or for doing right when they do wrong, in any thing, are hypocrites.

Q. Do they not always commit falsehoods in such cases ?

A. They do, by their actions, as much as if they told them with their tongues.

Q. Should you not despise such conduct, if you saw it in another ?

A. I should.

Q. Must you not think it mean and base, if you find it in yourself ?

A. I must.

Q. How are you to find out whether there is such a wrong tendency in your character or not ?

A. By asking myself about my motives and thoughts.

Q. In what other way can you discover this ?

A. By praying to God to teach me.

Q. When is an excellent time to do this ?

A. Every night, before I fall asleep.

Q. What resolution should you form, at the same time ?

A. That I will *appear* as I really *am* ; that I will not act a false part, but a true one,

Q. What prayer ought to accompany such a resolution ?

A. The prayer that God will help me to keep it, and to be sincere.

Q. Christ goes on, verse 16, &c., to tell us how we may know when persons are sincerely good, and when they are not ; how is this ?

A. He tells us, " By their fruits ye shall know them."

Q. What are our " fruits " ?

A. Our actions.

Q. Are not some of every person's actions good, and others bad ?

A. They are ; but he means the general course of our actions.

Q. How does he illustrate what he means ?

A. By the parable of the good tree and the corrupt tree.

Q. Why does he speak particularly of " figs," " thorns," " grapes," and " thistles ? "

A. Because these fruits and trees grew abundantly in the country where he was.

Q. What country was this ?

A. Judea, in Asia, at the eastern extremity of the Mediterranean Sea.

Q. Is it not quite probable that these trees and shrubs happened to be growing near the place where Jesus was speaking on the mount, and thus to have suggested themselves at that moment to his mind ?

A. It is.

Q. What is taught in the remainder of verse 16 ?

A. That as we do not expect to find grapes growing on thorn-bushes, or figs on thistles, so neither ought we to expect good actions from one whose heart is evil.

Q. What is implied in this ?

A. That a good character will produce good actions, just as surely as a fig-tree produces figs, just as naturally as a grape-vine bears grapes.

Q. What is implied here of bad men ?

A. That their conduct will be bad, just as thorn-bushes bear troublesome thorns, and not grapes.

Q. What does Jesus assert in verses 17 and 18 ?

A. That a vigorous, healthy tree always bears sound fruit, while a diseased tree bears imperfect or bad fruit.

Q. What is inferred from this ?

A. That when we see a man living a good life, we may conclude that he has good principles, good intentions, a good character.

Q. What else is inferred ?

A. That when we find our conduct wrong, we may conclude that something is wrong in our hearts.

Q. Having found that out, what is it our duty to do ?

A. Strive and pray that our hearts may be changed.

Q. What can you say of your moral conduct generally ?

A. That it is good or bad, according as the motive I act from is good or bad.

Q. Where does the source of all human goodness really dwell ?

A. In the soul, as is said in Luke vi. 45.

Q. What must you have, first of all, if you would be truly good ?

A. A deep desire to please God, and do his will.

Q. If you have that one strong desire, and feel it constantly, will you not be faithful in worshipping him, and keeping his commandments ?

A. I shall be, for I shall heartily love him.

Q. Turning, then, to your duties to your fellow-men, — to your companions, — what must you have in order that you may perform them well ?

A. I must have *in my heart* good affections for them.

Q. What are those affections ?

A. I must really sympathize with them, feel kindly to them, long to help them in their improvement, and make sacrifices of my own comfort for their sakes.

Q. If you have this love to God, and love to your fellows, *in your heart*, what will be the consequence ?

A. I shall do my duties to God, and my duties to my fellows, just as naturally as good fruit grows from a good tree.

Q. Will you not then be certainly sincere ?

A. I shall be, and not a hypocrite, because my *heart* is right.

Q. What is the solemn warning to all wicked persons in verse 19?

A. "Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down and cast into the fire."



LESSON VI.

PARABLE OF THE BUILDERS.

Q. Where is the parable of the builders recorded?

A. In Matthew's Gospel, chapter vii., verses 24 - 27.

Q. Where does Luke give us an account of the same parable?

A. In chapter vi. of his Gospel, verses 47 - 49.

Q. Will you repeat the parable as it is written in Matthew?

A. —.

Q. On what occasion did Jesus deliver it?

A. At the close of his Sermon on the Mount; it forms the concluding passage, or peroration, of that discourse.

Q. What do you understand to be the great lesson taught in the first part of this parable?

A. That those who love and imitate Jesus Christ will always be firm and strong in their characters, like houses that are built on a rock.

Q. What do you understand by the last part, or verses 26 and 27 ?

A. That those who do not follow Christ, nor try to live like him, will be weak, changeable, and apt to fall into sin and shame.

Q. Christ compares these last persons to houses beaten down and destroyed, because they are built on sand ; but are houses in this country often destroyed in this way ?

A. They are not.

Q. Why, then, should Jesus have used such a comparison ?

A. The climate, and the mode of building houses, were very different in Judea, where he lived, from ours.

Q. Will you state any fact that makes his language more plain ?

A. Judea is a hilly and rocky country, and in many places there is only a thin, loose bed of soil, or sand, spread over the solid stone.

Q. If a person should build a house on such a place as this, what would be likely to happen in case of a violent rain ?

A. The water might loosen and carry away this soil, and thus undermine and break down the house standing upon it.

Q. Do we know that this actually happens sometimes ?

A. Those who have travelled in that country state

that it does happen, especially to houses on the sides of hills, where the water rushes down with violence.

Q. In verse 25, we find Christ referring to the "rain," the "floods," and the "winds," as beating upon the house; what can you say of the rains in Judea?

A. They are sometimes very abundant, lasting three or four days at a time, and causing immense torrents to gather and pour down the hill-sides; they occur principally in autumn and spring. See Deut. xi. 10, 11.

Q. What are the "floods"?

A. These torrents just spoken of, flowing down, sometimes in new places, and sometimes made up of the common streams, swollen by the rains, and overflowing their banks, so as to sweep away whatever they meet in their downward course.

Q. What can you say of the "winds"?

A. These, too, are very violent, and often sudden, in Palestine, accompanying the storms of rain and hail.

Q. Will you point out on the map the country you call Palestine?

A. —.

Q. What other names has this same country?

A. It is called not only "Palestine," but "Judea," the "Land of Promise," the "Land of Canaan," and the "Holy Land."

Q. Why may it be appropriately called the "Holy Land"?

A. Because our Saviour lived there, and because nearly all the events recorded in the Holy Bible took place there.

Q. Why is it called the "Land of Promise"?

A. Because it was *promised* by God to the Hebrew nation when they escaped out of their slavery in Egypt, and went up to possess it. See Deut. xxvii. 3.

Q. Why is it called the "Land of Canaan"?

A. Because the nation or tribes of Canaanites dwelt in it before the Hebrews went up from Egypt, with Moses, to inhabit it.

Q. What other names besides "Hebrews" are applied in the Bible to the people who took it from the Canaanites, and continued to inhabit it till after the time of Christ?

A. They are called "Jews," "Israelites," "children of Israel," "the peculiar people," and God's "chosen people."

Q. In order to explain more fully this parable, will you tell how the common houses of these people were often built in the time of Christ?

A. The dwellings were frequently made of mud hardened by the sun, and of reeds and other frail materials, so that severe storms might easily prostrate them.

Q. We have seen in other places how the words of

Jesus in this Sermon on the Mount were sometimes suggested to him by some object directly before his eyes, and within the sight of his hearers ; might this have been the case in this parable respecting the houses ?

A. It might ; for as he looked upon the sides of the hills around him, he might have seen the ruins of some houses that had thus been destroyed by storms, because they were built upon the sand ; and might have pointed to them as he spoke.

Q. What would Jesus teach us is like such a ruined and broken-down dwelling ?

A. The character of any person who does not keep and practise, as well as hear, the good precepts of the Saviour, verse 26.

Q. What may you say of such a character ?

A. That it has no Christian principles to support it.

Q. What do all our characters need to be guarded against ?

A. Against those temptations that come upon us, like storms upon the house.

Q. From what source do these temptations arise ?

A. Sometimes from persons and things about us.

Q. Will you give an example of this ?

A. Our companions sometimes tempt us to be peevish and angry.

Q. If we yield, and indulge those bad feelings, what shall we be like ?

A. Like the weak house that is overthrown by the wind.

Q. When may you be said to be tempted by circumstances ?

A. When any thing that happens puts it into my mind to do wrong, as to tell a falsehood, or say what I do not mean, or to disobey my parents, for the sake of some pleasure or earthly advantage.

Q. If you yield, and do the wrong, what must your character be ?

A. It must be weak, and not strengthened, as it ought to be, by good principles.

Q. What will be the consequences if you thus give way to temptation and commit sin ?

A. I shall be like the broken-down walls of a house built on the sand.

Q. How will you then be obliged to look on yourself ?

A. With mortification, sorrow, and shame, because I did not maintain my virtue, instead of letting it go.

Q. How will all good persons look on you ?

A. With feelings of contempt and pain, and with a much deeper regret than when they see the walls of a building in ruins.

Q. How will God look upon you ?

A. With a righteous displeasure and pity, for he abhors all sin.

Q. Have you not more reason to dread the evil that

is in your own heart, than the evil that comes from without ?

A. I have, for I find much there that is deceitful and wicked.

Q. What are the most dangerous "rains," and "floods," and "winds," that threaten you ?

A. All the evil passions, appetites, desires, and selfishness in my own breast.

Q. If you are able to resist all these, what are you like ?

A. Christ says such a soul is like the wise man whose house is built on a solid rock, where the loose soil was first removed, so that the foundation could not be afterwards loosened by any tempest.

Q. Is it not a noble thing to be so firm and strong in virtue ?

A. It is the noblest honor I can possibly attain to.

Q. What will you say of that moral courage that enables a child to overcome temptation ?

A. It is the highest kind of courage ; it is far better than to have strong hands, or swift feet, or fine clothes, or any outward possessions.

Q. What ought we to strive first of all to control ?

A. Our own minds and feelings. See Prov. xvi. 32.

Q. If we learn to quench every bad feeling in our hearts, what else shall we be able to control very easily ?

A. All our words and actions.

Q. Who is really the best and noblest child ?

A. He that is most careful to govern all his feelings according to the precepts of Christ.

Q. What does Jesus refer to as "these sayings," in verse 26?

A. All the beautiful instructions that he had been giving in the Sermon on the Mount.

Q. If we practise these instructions, whom shall we be like?

A. Like Jesus himself, the purest and greatest being that ever lived on earth.

Q. How shall we be able to accomplish this?

A. By often studying his words, by admiring his spirit, by continual effort to resemble him, and by asking God, in prayer, to help us.

Q. If we continue firm, upright, and unshaken, through all the trials of this life, what may we hope for hereafter?

A. To be taken to that pure and holy heaven, where all good spirits dwell together, for ever, with Christ and with God.

LESSON VII.

PARABLE OF THE GOOD SAMARITAN.

Q. Will you repeat the parable of the good Samaritan?

A. (See the Gospel by Luke, chap. x. 30-38.)

Q. How do you learn what was the occasion of Christ's speaking this parable?

A. By referring to verse 25, and the following verses.

Q. What was this "lawyer" who questioned Jesus?

A. He was a person who gave himself to the study of the written laws of Moses, a "scribe."

Q. Were the scribes spoken of in the New Testament generally estimable characters?

A. They were often very deficient in benevolence and sincere piety, being, like the Pharisees, more careful to insist on ceremonies, and repeat forms of words, than to serve God, and love mankind.

Q. What is meant when it is said (verse 25) that this teacher of the law *tempted* Jesus?

A. That he put a question from a bad motive, namely, a desire to trouble Jesus, and if possible to make him contradict himself.

Q. Did Jesus refuse to answer him?

A. He did not, but kindly took pains to instruct and improve him.

Q. Jesus tells this scribe, in verses 27 and 28, what it is necessary to do in order to gain eternal life; how then does the scribe raise another question?

A. By asking, "Who is my neighbour?" implying that, though it might be his duty to love his *neighbour*, he was not obliged to love all mankind.

Q. How does Christ make him acknowledge his mistake, and show him that he ought to love every man, even his enemy?

A. By relating to him the parable of the good Samaritan.

Q. Jesus supposes a certain man to be going from Jerusalem to Jericho ; what may have suggested to his thoughts these two places, and this particular journey, just at this time ?

A. He may have been in that part of the country himself.

Q. What reason have you for thinking so ?

A. We find from other passages that he had just been travelling towards Jerusalem from Capernaum, through Samaria ; from verse 38 of this chapter, we find that, soon after, he arrived at a certain village where Mary and Martha lived, and this village we know was Bethany. See John xi. 1.

Q. Will you point out Capernaum, and Samaria, and Jericho, and Jerusalem, and Bethany, on a map of Palestine ?

A. —.

Q. If now you draw a line from Jerusalem to Jericho, where the man in the parable is said to have gone, would not Jesus, in journeying from Capernaum to Bethany pass that track ? *

A. —.

* It will be well for the teacher, especially if the pupil is young, to familiarize the localities to his mind by frequent geographical questions, referring not only to the position occupied by those Eastern places with relation to each other, but with relation also to other parts of the globe.

Q. Jesus speaks of this man whom he imagines to be going from Jerusalem to Jericho as "falling among thieves"; what reason have we for believing this was likely to happen there?

A. Travellers who have been there tell us it is a very lonely district of country, full of wild mountains, which are infested with bands of thieves and robbers.

Q. A priest and a Levite are spoken of as passing by the poor man, after he had been robbed and was lying wounded and helpless, without assisting him; how would it naturally happen that priests and Levites should be often on that road?

A. A great many of them — twelve thousand, it is said — lived in Jericho, but had frequent occasion to go up to Jerusalem, to perform ceremonies at the great temple there.

Q. Who were the priests among the Jews, and what was their business?

A. They were the descendants of Aaron, and their business was to perform religious offices, to instruct the people in the law, to offer sacrifices on the altars, and to cleanse and take care of the temple.

Q. Who were the Levites, and what was their business?

A. They were descendants of Levi; and they were set apart to wait on the priests, as their servants,

in and about the temple, and sometimes to make music at worship.

Q. If these persons, then, were religious officers, was it not peculiarly their duty to aid the distressed, and minister to the suffering, like this poor traveller?

A. It was; and therefore their cruelty and hardness of heart in passing by him is the more blameworthy.

Q. Who was it that took pity on the wounded man?

A. It was a Samaritan, or man from Samaria.

Q. But the man he helped was a Jew; was there not a hatred between the Samaritans and the Jews?

A. There was. See John iv. 9.

Q. Seeing, then, that there was this hostility between the two nations, was it not very generous in the Samaritan to overlook the quarrel, and show compassion for the Jew?

A. It was, and it was this that made his act peculiarly praiseworthy in the eyes of Christ, and has drawn towards him the admiration of all good men who have ever read the story.

Q. Is it not always noble and generous to rise above our little injuries and hard feelings, and forgive our enemies?

A. It is; Christ forgave even those who slandered him and put him to death; and he taught us to have the same spirit.

Q. If we are truly benevolent and kind, what shall we do?

A. We shall pity and help one man as well as another, even strangers and foreigners.

Q. What did this Samaritan do for the poor Jew ?

A. Verses 33 – 35.

Q. Why did he pour oil and wine upon the wounds ?

A. A kind of ointment was made of these things, that was healing.

Q. How much was the value of the “two pence” that he gave to the inn-keeper for taking care of the man ?

A. About twenty-eight cents in the coin used at that time.

Q. Was not the law-teacher obliged to confess that this was true generosity ?

A. He was, though his hatred of the very name of Samaritan was so strong that he would not speak it, but chose the expression “he that showed mercy on him” instead.

Q. From this parable, whom should we learn to regard as our neighbours, in the Christian sense ?

A. Not those who happen to live near us only ; but all of our fellow-creatures, for God has made us to sympathize with all.

“Our neighbour is the suffering man,
Though at the farthest pole.”

Q. How are we to heed the precept with which Jesus concluded this parable, — “Go and do thou likewise” ?

A. By endeavouring ourselves to perform kind offi-

ces for the distressed, and by feeling for others' troubles.

Q. What are some of the classes of persons that we ought especially to comfort ?

A. The sick, the poor, the oppressed, orphans, and those that are in affliction.

Q. Ought we not to think it a privilege to share our own comforts with those who have not so many as we ?

A. If we are truly humane, or truly Christians, we cannot do otherwise.

Q. If we are able to bestow few outward gifts, what can we give that is often equally valuable ?

A. A kind word, or some simple action, or even a sympathizing look.

Q. If we follow the Saviour's pattern of benevolence, what shall we be ready to do for the unfortunate ?

A. To lay aside our own wishes, and deny ourselves some pleasures, and incur some labor and inconvenience, for the sake of making them happy.

Q. What duty towards those who have injured or vexed you do you learn from this parable ?

A. To treat them with compassion and generosity, as well as those who have befriended me. Matt. v. 44, 45.

Q. If you do this, whose approbation will you be sure to gain ?

A. That of the nobler sentiments in my own heart, and that of my merciful Heavenly Father, who

is kind to me, notwithstanding my frequent offences against him. "He maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good; he sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust."

LESSON VIII.

?

PARABLE OF THE MAN AT REST AT NIGHT.

- Q.** When was this parable spoken by Jesus?
- A.** About a year after his baptism by John, Luke iii. 21, and soon after he attended the Feast of Dedication at Jerusalem, in the month of November, John x. 22.
- Q.** Where was he at this time?
- A.** He might probably have been on his journey from Jerusalem to Perea, on the east side of the Jordan.
(See map.)
- Q.** Where do you find the parable?
- A.** In Luke's Gospel, chap. xi., verses 5-8.
- Q.** What was the object of Jesus in relating it?
- A.** To teach us to pray, and to continue in the habit of praying.
- Q.** What great motive does he offer us for frequent prayer?
- A.** He shows that sincere, earnest prayer will be answered.

- Q.** From the preceding verses of the chapter, we learn what occasion it was that drew from Christ this parable ; what do we learn from verse 1 ?
- A.** That Jesus was in the habit of praying and communing with God his Father, and that thus he was himself an example of what he taught us to be. See also Matt. xiv. 23 ; Luke vi. 12 ; ix. 28 ; Mark i. 35 ; xiv. 35 ; John xvii. 1, &c. ; Matt. xiv. 19.
- Q.** It is said here that John the Baptist taught his disciples to pray ; will you give some account of this John ?
- A.** See Matt. iii., or Luke iii., and Matt. xiv.
- Q.** Was it customary in those times for religious teachers to instruct their followers, or disciples, in some particular form of prayer ?
- A.** It was.
- Q.** After repeating a prayer such as he would wish us, his disciples, to use, Christ relates this parable ; how does it begin ?
- A.** A person is supposed to be called up in the night by the arrival of a traveller, who wishes for a lodging and a supper.
- Q.** Is it customary for persons in the country of Judea, where Jesus was, to travel in the night ?
- A.** It is, because the climate is extremely warm, and it is more comfortable to journey in the cool of the night, than under the sun in the day-time.
- Q.** Being thus disturbed, the man of the house finds that he has no bread to offer the traveller ; what does he do ?

A. He goes to a neighbour, awakes him, and asks him to lend him three loaves.

Q. What reply does the neighbour make ?

A. That both he and his children are in bed, and that he cannot easily rise to get the loaves.

Q. Is he finally prevailed upon to do so, however ?

A. He is, by his friend's importunity ; that is, by his repeating and urging the request.

Q. If, then, this neighbour could be persuaded to do what was asked by the urging of his friend, and not by any hearty desire to accommodate, is it not much more certain that our Heavenly Father, who tenderly loves us, will grant our requests when we pray to him ?

A. It is, and this is what Christ designs to teach us.

Q. How does he show this in verses 9 and 10 ?

A. He tells us, there, in figurative language, that whatever we earnestly ask our Father in heaven to give us, for the good of our souls, he will surely bestow upon us.

Q. What does he tell us in the three following verses ?

A. That as kind earthly parents, when the children they love ask them for good and reasonable gifts, do not put them off with worthless or hurtful ones, so our Heavenly Parent, whose love is yet stronger and purer, can never refuse to answer our petitions.

Q. What is meant by the expression, " Your Heav-

only Father will give *the Holy Spirit* to them that ask him " ?

A. That he will give the direction and influence of his own good spirit to purify, and guide, and bless, and save our spirits.

Q. What is one of our chief dangers respecting this duty of prayer ?

A. That amidst our worldly occupations we shall forget and neglect it.

Q. Shall we not be greatly in fault if we do thus forget it ?

A. We shall, for it depends on ourselves whether we allow ourselves to become so much engrossed with worldly things.

Q. How can we guard against this ?

A. By setting apart some moments at a certain time, every day, for devotion.

Q. How should we spend such moments ?

A. Going away alone, we should think seriously of our faults, and ask God to pity us and forgive us, and help us to reform and please him.

Q. Has he not promised that he will forgive us and smile upon us, if we truly repent of our sins and ask his pardon ?

A. He has, many times, in the New Testament. See Luke vi. 37 ; 1 John i. 9.

Q. What assistance should we especially entreat God to afford us ?

A. His help in enabling us to resist those temptations

to which each of us is especially exposed, so that we may not be turned aside from virtue.

Q. If you feel that you are peculiarly in danger of doing wrong at some particular time, or in some particular way, what should you do to guard against it?

A. Pray God to help me and strengthen me, and make me to do right.

Q. What should you seek his assistance for, besides helping you to do right in your outward actions?

A. For controlling my language and conversation, so that I may speak nothing false, peevish, passionate, profane, slanderous, impure, or mean, and "offend not with my tongue."

Q. What else?

A. That he would aid me in keeping sin away from my secret thoughts and hidden feelings; because sin is as bad for me in secret as in public, and is just as offensive to Him "who seeth in secret."

Q. What is another important part of prayer?

A. Praying for others, which is called intercession.

Q. How should you pray for others?

A. I should ask God to bless them by making them good and happy, and sending them faith, hope, and peace.

Q. How can you pray for the interests of the truth?

A. By asking God to make every good cause prosperous, especially his holy church, and to spread knowledge, virtue, and piety over the whole earth.

Q. What classes of people do you feel that you should especially remember in your times of devotion?

A. The poor, the sick, the injured, the sorrowful, and, above all, the vicious.

Q. Ought you to pray for your enemies as well as your friends?

A. My Saviour tells me that I ought, Matt. v. 44, and he prayed, "Father forgive them," for those who were putting him to death on the cross.

Q. Will God make us good unless we try also to make ourselves good?

A. We have no promise that he will.

Q. What is yet another important part of devotion?

A. That we should thank our Father in Heaven for all his kindness and mercy towards us his children every moment we live; for he gives us every good thing.

Q. When Jesus gives us the form of prayer mentioned in verses 2-4 of this chapter, and also in Matt. vi. 9, &c., does he intend that we shall always repeat this prayer and *only* this?

A. He does not; though he teaches us that we should pray *after this manner*, and *often* repeat this, for it is undoubtedly the most perfect of all prayers.

Q. If we should take up each one of the expressions in it, should we not find that they either include or suggest every thing that we ought to pray for?

A. We should, and we ought always to think earnestly of the meaning of what we utter in this and in all other prayers.

Q. When we hear others pray aloud, what should we do ?

A. We should follow the language, and endeavour to make the prayer our own, by entering into it, and feeling it with all our hearts.

Q. What are we particularly to remember, as the lesson of this parable ?

A. That if we persevere faithfully in the habit of sincere daily prayer, God so loves us that he will hear us, and answer us, for our true spiritual good.



LESSON IX.

THE PARABLE OF THE GREAT SUPPER.

Q. Where do you find the parable of the great supper ?

A. In Luke, chapter xiv., verses 16 to 25.

Q. Will you read carefully this chapter xiv., from verse 1 up to verse 16, where the parable begins ?

A. —.

Q. On what occasion was the parable spoken ?

A. It appears from verse 1 that Jesus was “eating bread,” that is, he was *dining*, at the house of a distinguished Jew.

Q. Did the Jews make more than common preparations for dinner on the Sabbath ?

A. They did, for they thought that they honored the day, and showed their respect for their religion, by spreading a sumptuous feast.

Q. Was their Sabbath like our Sabbath ?

A. Not in many respects ; for while it was a day of feasting with them, with us it is a day of moral and spiritual improvement.

Q. Should we think it right to take up our time, or the time of our family domestics, with providing a more expensive and luxurious dinner on Sunday than on other days ?

A. We should not ; for then both we and they should have less time to attend worship, and read good books, and think of our duties.

Q. Would not the luxurious dinner be apt to tempt us to excessive eating ?

A. It would, and in that way make us stupid and dull, and less able to give our minds freely to religious instruction.

Q. Why, then, would you prefer to live very temperately and abstemiously on Sunday ?

A. Because the improvement of my spiritual nature is much nobler, and more important to me, than the gratification of those appetites that I have in common with brute animals.

Q. Does the word *parable* in verse 7 mean just what that word usually means ?

A. It does not ; it means here, as in some other places, a *precept*, a *direction*. See Lesson I.

Q. What was the direction that Jesus proceeded to give to those about him ?

A. (Read verses 8 – 10 ; also Matt. xxiii. 6.)

Q. What is the general application of this passage that we ought to make ?

A. We should learn to be humble ; not to put ourselves forward immodestly in any thing ; to give others the best place, and more respect and more credit than we give ourselves.

Q. What does Christ mean when he says that humble persons shall “ have worship ” (verse 10) ?

A. He means that others will honor and love them, because they are humble.

Q. Will you read verses 12 – 14 ?

A. —.

Q. Does Jesus mean to say, in verse 12, that we really ought not to invite our friends, and relatives, and rich neighbours to our houses at all ?

A. Not by any means ; he teaches that it will be a mean motive if we invite them *for the sake of being invited by them in return*.

Q. What else do we learn from these three verses ?

A. That it is much more noble, and much more acceptable to God, for us to feed the poor, and to be kind to the unfortunate, the lowly, and the sick, than to make a display of entertainments and par-

ties of pleasure for the rich and comfortable, to gratify our pride.

Q. To whom were these three verses peculiarly addressed by Jesus?

A. To those who *make* entertainments, as the previous verses had been addressed to those who *attend* them.

Q. What do you understand by the words spoken by the person mentioned in verse 15?

A. That all those who shall partake of the privileges of a belief in the gospel of Christ shall be happy and blessed.

Q. How does it appear that sharing in the peace and wisdom of Christian faith may be compared to "eating bread"?

A. That faith, and the truth of Christ, nourish the soul's life, as bread nourishes the body. See John vi. 32-35.

Q. What reply does Jesus make to this person's remark?

A. He replies by uttering this parable of the Great Supper. (The pupil may repeat, or read it.)

Q. How do you explain it, that in all these several passages Jesus makes constant allusions to feasts, or suppers?

A. It was his custom to take his subject from some passing event, or present object; and at this moment he was at a feast, which suggested to him his language.

- Q.** In verse 16, are we to suppose that those persons whom the man sent his servant to call in to his supper had been previously invited ?
- A.** We are ; and that they had accepted the invitation, or promised to come.
- Q.** How are we to regard their conduct, then, in offering the excuses which are written in verses 18-20 for staying away ?
- A.** They broke their promises, and were guilty of great impoliteness to the individual who had kindly invited them.
- Q.** How did that individual feel under such treatment ?
- A.** He felt a natural indignation.
- Q.** Does the word " anger " or " angry " (verse 21), as used in the Bible, always refer to that anger which is wicked ?
- A.** It does not ; it sometimes signifies an indignation at injustice, or meanness, or sin, which is not wrong. (See Eph. iv. 26, and all those passages in the Old Testament where God is said to be angry ; as Psalm vii. 11, and Numbers xxv. 3.)
- Q.** What is that wicked anger which degrades us and displeases God ?
- A.** It is the passion that makes us wish to do some harm to others, and takes away our self-control.
- Q.** Will you refer to some passages in the Bible which show us that such anger is very wrong ?
- A.** Prov. xiv. 17, xxix. 22, xvi. 32, and xxvii. 4 ;

Eccles. vii. 9; Matt. v. 22; Eph. iv. 31; Col. iii. 8.

Q. What other reasons have we for knowing that angry passions are wrong?

A. Our conscience tells us so, and we feel ashamed and uncomfortable after we have indulged them.

Q. What did the master of the house tell his servant to do, after his invitations had been so slighted?

A. To go out and call in to his supper "the poor," "the maimed" or crippled, "the halt" or lame, and "the blind."

Q. In order that all the room might be filled, he sent out a second time; what did he mean by telling the servant to "*compel* them to come in"?

A. He wished to have them urgently entreated — even those poor beggars that sit by the highways and hedges — to come.

Q. Was it customary for some of the Jews to provide entertainments for poor people?

A. It was.

Q. Turn now to the spiritual lesson of the parable; and who may we consider to be intended by the "master of the house" who gave the supper?

A. Our Father in heaven.

Q. What is the "supper" he provides?

A. All that *truth of the gospel*, which shows us how to live so as to secure his favor, and gain virtue and eternal life.

Q. Who is the "servant" or messenger that comes to call men to this supper?

A. Jesus Christ.

Q. Who are meant by those persons that were first "bidden," or invited?

A. The Jews; because Christ appeared and lived among them in their nation at Judea; and thus his gospel or teaching, which is "the supper," was first offered to them.

Q. How did they refuse to accept the offer?

A. By not believing what Christ said, but persecuting and scorning him, and at last putting him to death.

Q. Who are signified by those "poor," "maimed," "halt," and "blind"?

A. The people, not Jews, but belonging to other nations, called Gentiles.

Q. Why were these represented as being such poor outcasts?

A. Because up to the time when Christ lived they had not enjoyed so many advantages of instruction and help as the Jews had for knowing the truth.

Q. When the apostles went forth soon after, however, and preached the gospel to them, did they gladly receive it?

A. They did; so that the parable proved true, and these poor Gentiles enjoyed the "supper" of the holy instructions of Christ, while the Jews shut themselves out by their unbelieving and selfish dispositions.

Q. What should we learn by this?

- A.** That the poor, and ignorant, and weak, if they try, may be good and happy, and go to heaven, as well as the rich, and the fashionable, and the well-dressed children.
- Q.** Does it not appear from this parable that God wishes us all, and invites us all, to be virtuous, and to love and trust him ?
- A.** It does ; and there is every reason why we should do so.
- Q.** What may *you* learn from what is said of excuses in this parable ?
- A.** That I cannot have any *good* excuse for not doing right ; and that if I love my earthly pleasure or possessions more than my duty and my kind Heavenly Father, I am in danger of losing my own soul.



LESSON X.

PARABLE OF THE TOWER, AND OF THE KING GOING TO WAR.

- Q.** In the lesson before the last, we saw that Jesus had left Jerusalem, after attending the Feast of Dedication there ; where did he go at that time ?
- A.** Into the country called Perea, on the east side of the river Jordan. (See map.)

Q. Why is this country called *Perea* ?

A. From the Greek word "*peran*," which signifies "*beyond*."

Q. And why should this country be named from that word ?

A. Because it is on the east side of, i. e. beyond, that river, Jordan, which divides the country of Judea into two parts ; as Jerusalem, the chief city, is on the west side, the people there were accustomed to speak of the east side as *beyond*, or *Perea*.

Q. Was Jesus probably somewhere in Perea when he spoke these parables, and the last one, on the Great Supper ?

A. He was.

Q. Where do you find these parables concerning the tower, and the king going to war ?

A. They follow directly after the parable of the last lesson, in the 14th chapter of Luke's Gospel.

Q. What are we told in verse 25 ?

A. That multitudes of people went with him.

Q. Why did they follow him ?

A. They were drawn around him by the striking truths he uttered, by the simplicity and beauty of his life, and by his miraculous works.

Q. What may we naturally suppose respecting the voice and appearance of Jesus ?

A. That a person so full of goodness and love must have been gentle and kind in his deportment, and

that he spoke with the tones of earnestness and sincerity.

Q. What seems to have been Christ's object in what he immediately said to these multitudes that were following him, verse 26 ?

A. To show them that, if they really intended to become his followers, they must not expect to find it an easy thing, but a work of great difficulty and self-denial.

Q. What do you understand by being a follower of Jesus Christ ?

A. Imitating his example, acting from that spirit of goodness and love that he always displayed, and practising those virtues that he practised.

Q. Ought we to consider this an easy task ?

A. It cannot be easy ; it must cost us exertion.

Q. But shall we be afraid of that exertion ?

A. Never, for God will be our friend, and will give us a noble reward.

Q. What will that reward be ?

A. An approving conscience, a peaceful heart, and eternal joy in heaven.

Q. Does Jesus mean, in verse 26, that we must *absolutely hate* our father and mother and other relatives, in order to be his followers ?

A. He cannot mean this ; for he teaches us, in all parts of his instructions, to *love* all mankind, to love our kindred and acquaintances, — not to hate them.

Q. How does it happen that this word "hate" is used here ?

A. Jesus spoke in the Greek language, and the words that he used did not convey to those who heard him any such meaning as "hate" ; but the men who translated the New Testament from the Greek into our English language placed this word here.

Q. How might they have expressed Christ's meaning more accurately ?

A. By writing thus : " If any man come to me, he cannot be truly my disciple, unless he loves me and the virtue that I teach more than he loves his father, or mother, or wife, or children, or brethren, or sisters, or his own life."

Q. Is not this shown to be exactly what Christ did say, in Matthew's Gospel ?

A. It is ; see Matt. x. 37.

Q. In what other passage is it said that a person is "hated" when it is only meant that he is *loved less* than some other person ?

A. Paul's Epistle to the Romans, chap. ix., verse 13.

Q. What then do you understand by this saying of Christ ?

A. That I must love all my earthly friends less than I love to do my duty to Christ and to God ; and that I must obey my conscience and my Maker, even if I should be obliged, in doing so, to displease some companion or relative.

Q. What does Jesus go on to say in verse 27, and

what does he mean by telling us we must "bear the cross"?

A. In those days, persons who believed on Christ and followed him were persecuted by the Jews, who did not wish to believe him, on account of their prejudices and sins; and as these unbelievers were the strongest party, they sometimes cruelly put the followers of Christ to death, by stretching them on two pieces of wood nailed together in the form of a *cross*.

Q. Where do you find an account of Christ's own death on such a cross, that is, his crucifixion?

A. In Luke, chapter xxiii., in Mark, chapter xv., and in Matthew, chapter xxvii.

Q. Why does Jesus speak of these awful dangers beforehand?

A. He is always open and fair; he wishes these people to understand that they will have to meet such trials; and he warns them that, unless they are ready to endure them, they cannot be his disciples.

Q. Suppose that a person should forsake the path of duty, and do a wrong action, through his fear of others, what kind of a character would he have?

A. A mean and cowardly character.

Q. Will you state now the meaning of the parable of "building the tower," verses 28 - 30?

A. Jesus shows us that before making up our minds to be Christians we must "count the cost"; that

is, look at all the difficulties and trials it will cost us ; just as a man counts the cost of a tower before he begins to build it.

Q. What kind of a "tower" is referred to here ?

A. In those days, and in that country, the tops of the houses were flat, so that persons could walk about on them ; and the *tower* was built up on the roof, and contained some small rooms for places of retirement and prayer.

Q. What other illustration does Jesus give of the importance of counting the cost of an undertaking beforehand ?

A. See verses 32 and 33.

Q. How does Jesus sum up the lesson of this passage in verse 33 ?

A. That if we are not ready to forsake every thing else for the sake of imitating him, we are not fit to be his disciples.

Q. What was the chief reason that he and his first followers were obliged to suffer so much for their faith ?

A. It was because his religion was so much opposed to the wickedness and errors of mankind. They persecuted him because he reproved their sins.

Q. What is the great trial that *we* are called to undergo in being Christians ?

A. We are obliged to deny ourselves all sinful pleasures, and sometimes to be ridiculed and despised by bad persons.

Q. Can we be thorough Christians without denying whatever in us is wrong?

A. We cannot.

Q. When we feel the desire to do any thing that is wicked, how can we resist it?

A. By thinking how Christ would do, and making a noble effort to do likewise.

Q. From what quarter do most of our temptations come?

A. From our own sensual passions.

Q. What then should we pray that we may become?

A. More and more spiritually-minded.

Q. Will you mention, in your own words, some of the ways in which you think you are most likely to do wrong?

A. —.

Q. How should you act if other persons blame you, or ridicule you, for doing what is right?

A. I should be above it, and persevere in my duty.

Q. What glorious promise does Jesus make to those who take this Christian course.

A. See Matt. xix. 29.

LESSON XI.

PARABLE OF THE LOST SHEEP, AND OF THE LOST
PIECE OF SILVER.

Q. What was it that drew from Christ the parables recorded in the fifteenth chapter of Luke's Gospel ?

A. The fact mentioned in verse 1,— that as Jesus was teaching on some occasion in Perea, the “ publicans and sinners ” came near to hear his instructions.

Q. Who were the “ publicans ” mentioned here ?

A. They were men who had it for their business to collect taxes from the Jewish people, to be paid over to the government.

Q. What made their character and office especially odious and unpopular ?

A. The fact that these taxes which they collected, and which the people were obliged to pay, were levied by the emperor of Rome, a foreign ruler, and went to the Roman empire.

Q. How did it happen that the Jews were obliged to pay taxes to the Roman government ?

A. The armies of that government had at this time conquered Judea, and held it in subjection,— a subjection, however, which much vexed the Jews ; and hence their hatred of the tax-collectors, or publicans.

Q. Is it not possible, also, that these publicans did sometimes go beyond the authority given them, and exact from the people larger sums than they were directed to?

A. It is.

Q. How do we find publicans spoken of frequently in the New Testament?

A. They are mentioned in many places, as in this passage, in connection with sinners, as if they were despised. Luke v. 30.

Q. Did Jesus despise them?

A. He never despised any human soul; and although he rebuked all their sins, he pitied their condition, respected their natures because they were capable of better things, and longed to restore them to virtue.

Q. Who were the "Pharisees and scribes" mentioned in verse 2?

A. They were classes of men who were very strict in performing such outward actions as their law enjoined upon them, and who spent much time in studying that law and disputing about it.

Q. What was their character generally?

A. They were cold-hearted and selfish; and they were much more careful to perform particular ceremonies than to cherish in their hearts those good affections, or to do those benevolent deeds, which Christ most loved.

Q. Where do you find how Christ regarded them,

and their outside formality, without holiness and love ?

A. In Matt. v. 20, in a large part of Matt. xxiii., and Luke xx. 46.

Q. What does he plainly imply respecting them in many places ?

A. That though they pretended to despise publicans and sinners, and refused to go near them, yet they themselves had perhaps as many faults, such as pride, self-righteousness, insincerity, love of the world, and uncharitableness.

Q. What may we learn from this ?

A. Not to be forward to accuse others of doing wrong while our own characters are open to rebuke.

Q. Are we not apt to suppose that, if we have not those sins which some others have, we have no sins ?

A. We are ; whereas we may really be guilty of some other sins, which, though different, are just as bad.

Q. In order to show his reason for being in the company of sinners, and speaking to them, Jesus proceeds to deliver a parable in verses 3-6 ; will you repeat this parable of the lost sheep ?

A. —.

Q. What is the amount of this parable ?

A. That if a man have a flock of a hundred sheep, and lose one of them, he will leave the remaining

ninety-nine to take care of themselves, while he searches for the lost one ; and if he finds it, he feels a more lively pleasure in it than in the fact that the other ninety-nine have staid in their places, and have not been lost.

Q. What, now, is the application Christ would make of this parable ?

A. He would compare the sinner, — the bad man, — to that lost sheep, and himself to the shepherd who goes out to seek for him, to bring him back to goodness again.

Q. Will you explain how it should ever happen that one of a flock of sheep should be lost in that country ?

A. Many of the inhabitants of Judea kept sheep as their occupation, and as they did not confine them to any one pasture, but drove them from place to place in various directions, as the seasons changed, it was not strange that, in some wild place or “ wilderness,” a single sheep should wander away from the rest.

Q. Using this comparison of the parable, if the sinful man, or the sinful child, is the “ lost sheep,” who is the good shepherd that seeks for him to bring him back to the fold ?

A. Jesus, the Saviour, who came into the world to bring wandering sinners home to virtue, and home to the peace of heaven.

Q. In what other passages is Christ represented as

the "Good Shepherd" of the sheep; that is, as the guide and careful leader of his followers on earth?

A. In several verses of John x., in Heb. xiii. 20, and 1 Pet. v. 4.

Q. If, then, Christ is the shepherd, and if all who sin are the sheep whom he seeks to bring back into the "fold," what is that fold?

A. As the sheepfold is the place where the sheep gather to rest at night, so the fold of those who follow Christ is in the society of his disciples, — the church of his believers and friends.

Q. When we are brought back from our sins, or wrong habits, where shall we find ourselves?

A. We shall find ourselves, spiritually, in the course of a righteous, and therefore a happy, life.

Q. How does Jesus illustrate the truth conveyed by this parable in another form?

A. By a very similar parable in verses 8 and 9, in which he asks if a woman would not feel a keener joy in finding *one* piece of silver that she had lost, than in keeping *nine* safely in her possession.

Q. The Saviour concludes both of these parables in nearly the same words; see verses 7 and 10; what is the meaning of verse 10?

A. That those happy and pure spirits which ever live with God feel a holy joy whenever any one of us, who has been sinful, repents and becomes virtuous and devout.

Q. How ought this to affect us ?

A. It is a noble motive for us to repent and become good, that we can cause those holy beings to rejoice.

Q. In verse 7 it is added that this joy in heaven over one sinner that repenteth is not only great, but is greater than the joy "over ninety and nine just persons which need no repentance"; what do you understand by this ?

A. That there is a more *vivid* and *intense* satisfaction felt at such an unexpected change in a bad person's character, than in the regular course of those who have not been in the sinner's danger and misery.

Q. What other explanation can be offered ?

A. That Christ meant that there is more joy in heaven over one sinner that repenteth than over ninety and nine persons like the scribes and Pharisees, who *think themselves* just, who think they have no need of repentance, and therefore do not repent.

Q. What now should you take as the main purpose of the Saviour in putting forth these two parables ?

A. To show us that when he allowed himself to be in the company of sinners, it was that he might lead them to repent of their sins, and give them the happiness of becoming virtuous and religious men.

Q. Do we not find that our Heavenly Father looks with great kindness and compassion on those who,

having been sinful, repent and ask his forgiveness?

A. We do; and we have repeated promises in his word, that, whenever we ask his forgiveness sincerely, he will grant it.

Q. If, then, God and the Saviour so love all mankind that they earnestly desire to deliver them from the misery of sinful habits and bad passions, how ought we to regard all vicious persons, inebriates, and criminals?

A. With great compassion, because they are under this awful darkness of sin, and therefore need our pity.

Q. If sinful persons seem happy, do they need our compassion the less?

A. Not at all, for sooner or later their sin will make them wretched.

Q. While we pity and love the person that commits sin, as Jesus did, on account of his immortal soul and the injury he inflicts upon it, how should we regard sin itself?

A. We should despise it, and resist it, and shun it, whether in our own breasts or elsewhere.

Q. When we see how Jesus answered the proud "scribes and Pharisees," who thought it *beneath* them to notice "publicans and sinners," — showing that even he, who was so much higher and purer than they, did not think it beneath him, — what should we learn from it?

A. Not to think of ourselves more highly than we think of others, but to remember that we also are sinners.

Q. What should occur to us when we see vicious and criminal persons ?

A. That, if it were not for our friends and the circumstances of our education, we too might have been as bad as they.

Q. What feeling should this awaken ?

A. Gratitude for the mercy that we have been kept from being worse than we are.

Q. And what resolution should it inspire us with ?

A. To strive, that, as our condition is more favorable than that of many others, we are called upon in the sight of God to have better characters than they, and to improve continually.



LESSON XII.

PARABLE OF THE PRODIGAL SON.

Q. What seems to have been the occasion of Christ's delivering the parable of the prodigal son ?

A. He probably delivered it immediately after those two that we examined in the preceding lesson ; and it seems to have been called out by the same

cause, namely, the complaint of the Pharisees that he mingled with publicans and sinners.

Q. What does Jesus show us by this parable?

A. That whenever the sinful forsake their wicked ways, and come in prayer to their Heavenly Father, asking forgiveness, he will forgive them, and make them happy again.

Q. If we study the parable closely, what else shall we find?

A. That the story describes, figuratively, the whole course of a young man, through temptation, sin, repentance, and conversion.

Q. Jesus begins with imagining a father as having two sons; what does the younger of these sons ask?

A. He asks his father to give him his part of the property, whatever it may be, at once, instead of waiting for his father to give it to him when he should see fit; and this was his first misstep.

Q. Why was this wrong?

A. It showed an unbecoming haste in the young man to get possession of the property, and also a bad desire to escape from the control of his father.

Q. When you see a young man eager to leave his home and be out of the reach of his kind parents, what do you naturally ask?

A. If it is not ungrateful to grow weary of their kind protection over him, merely for the sake of following his own will.

Q. Did the father comply with this request of his son?

A. He did, for he probably saw that his son would not be satisfied till he had tried his own way, verse 12.

Q. What foolish course did the young man take next?

A. He collected all his money, travelled into a distant place, and there wasted it all in idleness and dissipation, verse 13.

Q. What better way can you point out, that he might have followed?

A. He might have devoted himself industriously, temperately, and happily to some useful business.

Q. We are then told (verse 14), that, after all his money was spent, his distress was made more severe by a great famine that arose in the land where he was; what is a famine?

A. A scarcity of food, arising generally from an unfruitful season, and making provisions very costly; this would increase the young man's distress, as he would find it more difficult to subsist on charity.

Q. In this wretched condition, which he had so foolishly brought upon himself, what did he do?

A. He found employment as a hired laborer for a citizen of that country, and his work was to take care of swine and feed them, verse 15.

Q. What proof is given us that he was exceedingly poor?

A. He obtained so little sustenance that he was glad to fill himself even with the husks eaten by the swine.

Q. What were these "husks"?

A. They were pods, containing fruit, which grew on the carob-tree, — a coarse article of food.

Q. Does not every young man who becomes dissipated and sensual plunge himself into as great misery as this, whether he wanders to a distance from home or not?

A. He does, because his worst destitution and suffering is always in his conscience and his heart.

Q. In verse 17, it is said that this prodigal young man, when he *came to himself*, contrasted his miserable condition with that of even the servants in the distant home of his father; what is the peculiar force of this phrase "he came to himself"?

A. During his vicious and thoughtless course thus far, he had been like one *beside himself*, like one deranged; and when he began to reflect seriously, and to remember that beautiful home that he had forsaken, and to long to return, it was *coming to himself*; it was coming to his right senses again.

Q. What noble resolution did the young man take then?

A. See verse 18.

Q. What is especially praiseworthy in this good resolution?

A. That he was determined to confess his faults ; not to pretend proudly that he had done right, but to say, as he felt, " Father, I have sinned against Heaven and before thee."

Q. What other beautiful trait does he show ? (verse 19.)

A. He does not *claim* his father's compassion, for he feels that he does not deserve it ; but he very humbly trusts to the forgiving love of his father to give him the lowly place of a servant.

Q. Did he put his good resolution into practice ? (verse 20.)

A. He did ; and this is the only way in which our virtuous purposes can have any value ; if we do not *act* upon them, they are good for nothing.

Q. How did his father feel toward him and receive him ?

A. With all a father's tender affection and joy to see him return once more (verse 20).

Q. When the young man uttered his sorrowful confession (verse 21), what did the father reply ?

A. He gave such a reply as showed his gladness, and how ready he was to forgive all his son's bad conduct ; and he gave directions to have those things done which were customary in that country, and were the tokens of the utmost rejoicing.

Q. In reading the remainder of the chapter, you perceive that the elder son, who had remained all this time at home with his father, felt angry when he

found so much pleasure was excited by his wicked brother's return ; what seems to have been precisely his feeling ?

A. He showed a base and mean jealousy, because his father gave so much attention to his younger brother.

Q. What ought he to have remembered ?

A. That all this time this younger brother had been suffering the dreadful consequences of his dissolute and vicious life, while he, the elder, had been enjoying the comforts of a regular and obedient life with his father.

Q. What, then, should he have felt ?

A. He should have pitied that brother, and have been willing that one who had endured so much for his wickedness should now be encouraged and welcomed back with joy to virtue and home.

Q. Having thus seen how much instruction this parable of the prodigal son gives to all young persons, simply by its plain and literal meaning, what does it teach as an allegory, — *as a parable* ?

A. It teaches us not only our duties to our earthly parents, but also respecting our relations to God.

Q. Whom does the *father* of the two sons signify in the parable ?

A. Our Father in Heaven, the Father of all mankind.

Q. Who are represented by the two sons ?

A. All the children of his human family, — the obe-

dient by the elder son, the disobedient by the younger.

Q. When do all of us wander away from our Heavenly Father's home, like the prodigal who left his father's house?

A. Whenever we forsake goodness, and grow worldly-minded, selfish, or dissolute.

Q. Shall we not always find that the moment we begin to do this, we shall take the road towards misery and shame?

A. We shall, for by the law of our natures sin must lead to sorrow, and virtue must lead to peace.

Q. When may we be said to be in the *far-off country*?

A. When we are living without Christian principle, and without prayer.

Q. When may we be said, like the prodigal, to *come to ourselves*?

A. When we begin to feel earnestly that we are doing wrong, and to long to do better.

Q. What is this feeling often called?

A. Repentance.

Q. If it is sincere and true repentance, what will it lead us to do?

A. To go to God in prayer, as the prodigal goes in the parable to his father, and humbly entreat him to forgive us, and look upon us once more with favor, and help us to return to a righteous life.

Q. When should we do this?

A. When we have sinned, and every time we have sinned.

Q. By showing us how the young man's father received his son, what does Jesus teach us respecting our reception by God ?

A. He shows us that God will always be ready to answer our requests, and will love to receive them.

Q. What other sure pledge have we of this truth ?

A. Jesus Christ himself gave up his own life and died on the cross to prove to us how willing God is to forgive us.

Q. How does this appear ?

A. If God so loved us that he suffered his own beloved son to die that he might reveal to us the power of goodness, we must certainly infer that he will pardon us whenever we come to him with repentance.

Q. On this account, in whose name should we offer our prayers when we pray for pardon ?

A. In the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, John xvi. 23.

Q. How should we feel towards our fellow-creatures who have been very sinful, but are struggling to reform and become Christians ?

A. We should not be jealous of them, as the elder son in the parable was of the younger, but we should rejoice to see them happy, and to see their friends happy, in their conversion.

Q. What more should we be ready to do ?

- A.** To assist them in their good exertions, to encourage them, and to try to make duty delightful to them.
- Q.** Inasmuch as we are all sinners, in a greater or less degree, what should be our most earnest effort and prayer?
- A.** That we may be changed from sin to holiness.



LESSON XIII.

THE PARABLE OF THE UNJUST STEWARD.

- Q.** Where do you find the Saviour's parable of the unjust steward?
- A.** In the first eight verses of the sixteenth chapter of Luke's Gospel; the five verses following also contain words of the Saviour that relate to the parable and explain it.
- Q.** At what time did Jesus utter this parable?
- A.** Probably soon after he uttered several of the last parables that we have been studying.
- Q.** And at what period in his life was this?
- A.** Near the close of it; between the time of his attendance at the Feast of Dedication in Jerusalem (spoken of in John x. 22), and his last attendance at the Feast of the Passover there.
- Q.** Where was Jesus at this time?

A. Probably he was still travelling on the east side of the river Jordan ; see John x. 39, 40.

Q. Point out, from the map, the position of this country, its direction from Jerusalem, and the course of the river Jordan.

A. —.

Q. Will you repeat this parable, either in the language in which it is written by Luke, or in your own language ?

A. —.

Q. To whom did Jesus address this parable ?

A. To his own disciples and friends, for their instruction. See verse 1.

Q. To whom had he been addressing the three preceding parables that we have studied, written in the preceding chapter ?

A. To the scribes and Pharisees. See chap. xv. verses 2, 3.

Q. What is a " steward " ?

A. He is an officer, belonging to the household of a rich man, who acts as an agent in managing the affairs of his employer, and in keeping his accounts.

Q. What was the accusation brought against this steward ?

A. Some one informed his employer that the steward had been neglectful, or dishonest, or both, and had thus wasted his master's goods, instead of saving them carefully, as it was his duty to do, verse 1.

Q. What course did the rich man pursue in relation to him ?

A. He called the steward to him, told him to make a statement of all his transactions, and informed him that he must leave his place on account of his misconduct, verse 2.

Q. As the steward then deliberates what he shall do for a living, why does he say that he " cannot dig " ?

A. Either he was not strong enough in health for such hard labor as digging the earth, or else he did not understand that kind of work, from not having been accustomed to it.

Q. It seems that he could think of no occupation that would afford him a livelihood ; but why could he not " beg " ?

A. He felt that shame at becoming a beggar, which is natural to us all.

Q. Why do we feel this shame ?

A. Because we know that it is more honorable for us to earn our own support, than it is to ask others to maintain us out of what belongs to themselves.

Q. Ought not this to make us pity and help those who are industrious and conscientious persons, but who are kept in distressing poverty by sickness or unavoidable misfortune ?

A. It ought ; for it must cost them a great trial to beg.

Q. What was the amount of the resolution he formed, spoken of in verse 4 ?

A. He resolved to do something to lay those who owed debts to his employer under an obligation to himself.

Q. What was his object in this ?

A. To make them feel thankful to him, and thus willing to furnish him a home in their houses.

Q. Will you explain how he proceeded to do this in the first case ?

A. He sent for one of those who owed his employer, and told him to take the writing, or note, wherein he had engaged to pay a hundred measures of oil, erase the words, and put down instead only fifty measures of oil, verses 5 and 6.

Q. How did this help the debtor ?

A. It reduced his debt one half ; so that when the time came for paying the rich man, that debtor was bound by the new writing to pay only half as much as he would have been obliged to pay if the old writing had been kept. For this favor he must thank the steward.

Q. What kind of oil was this that was mentioned here ?

A. A sweet oil that was obtained from the fruit of the olive-tree in Palestine.

Q. What was it used for ?

A. It was valuable for burning in lamps, see Exodus xxvii. 20, and Matt. xxv. 3, 4 ; for food, to be eaten like butter, see 1 Kings xvii. 12, and Ezekiel xvi. 13 ; and for anointing the body, see 1 Samuel x. 1, and Psalm xxiii. 5.

Q. How much did one "measure" (or bath) of this oil contain?

A. As many as twelve gallons.

Q. What did the steward do to make himself acceptable to another person?

A. He told him to alter his "bill," or contract, in a similar way, so that instead of having to pay a hundred measures of wheat he should only have to pay fourscore measures, verse 7.

Q. How many are fourscore?

A. Eighty; one score is twenty.

Q. And how much did a measure of wheat contain?

A. About fifteen bushels.

Q. Does it appear that the steward defrauded his employer of these sums by reducing the amount of the debts in this way?

A. It does not, certainly. He very probably intended to make up the deficiency himself, and to pay over to his employer, out of his own income, as much as these debtors were excused from paying.

Q. How is it probable these debts were incurred?

A. They were, we may presume, a portion of the produce of land hired by these men as tenants of "the rich man," and were due to him as rent.

Q. Why is the rich man called "lord" in the 5th and 8th verses?

A. The word "lord" means here "master," or "owner of the land," and "head of the household."

Q. In what light did the rich man regard the character of this steward ?

A. He regarded him as *unjust*. See verses 2 and 8.

Q. Why did he regard him so ?

A. Because he had wasted goods that did not belong to him, and so abused his office, and been unfaithful to his trust.

Q. Why did the rich man "commend" his steward then, as it is said he did, in verse 8 ?

A. He commended him, not for his injustice and prodigality ; on that part of his conduct he looked with disapprobation ; but he praised him for his prudence, his foresight, his judgment, in taking so sure a method of making friends and securing a future support from those friends.

Q. How would that support be likely to be given to the steward ?

A. These persons that had been favored by the steward would provide for him after he was turned out of his stewardship.

Q. In this respect, how are we to regard his conduct ?

A. As merely a shrewd piece of worldly calculation

Q. Where does the parable properly end ?

A. At the word "wisely," in verse 8.

Q. Christ, having concluded the parable, adds these words : "For the children of this world are in their generation wiser than the children of light." Whom does he mean by "the children of this world ?"

A. He means those persons who are worldly-minded, — who care for worldly convenience and prosperity, eating and drinking, riches and pleasure, dress and admiration, more than for virtue, goodness, and the approbation of God.

Q. Whom does he mean by “the children of light.”

A. He means those who love to be good, who act from religious principle; and who on this account have their minds and hearts full of peace, clearness, and “light.” See Eph. v. 8; 1 Thess. v. 5; 1 John ii. 9, 10; Isaiah ii. 5; 2 Cor. iv. 6.

Q. What does he mean, then, by saying that the children of this world are, *in their generation*, wiser than the children of light?

A. He means that they are wiser *in their way*; that is, that they often take more pains, and show more careful forethought in gaining earthly good, than Christians do in gaining spiritual and immortal good, wisdom, and holiness.

Q. Will you repeat what Christ says, in further explanation of this parable, in verse 9?

A. —.

Q. What do you understand by “the mammon of unrighteousness”?

A. Earthly riches; the perishable things that we possess in this world.

Q. How are we to make these our “friends”?

A. Not by becoming too much attached to them, but by so using them that they may strengthen our virtue, and increase our disposition to do good.

Q. In what ways can we thus use them ?

A. By tasting moderately of earthly enjoyment ; by being prudent and temperate ; by not wasting any thing ; by avoiding all excess in eating, drinking, dress, and amusement ; and by giving a portion of our money to the poor, to feed the hungry, and clothe the destitute, and instruct the ignorant, and send the gospel where it is not known.

Q. If we use what property we have in this way, how will it appear as our " friend " ?

A. It will be one means of preparing our souls for heaven ; and when we " fail," grow old, become sick and die, it will have helped us to gain admission into those " everlasting habitations," where we shall be happy with our Heavenly Father, and Jesus Christ, and all pure spirits, for ever.

Q. What does Christ teach in verse 10 ?

A. That those who act from Christian principle will be as careful to do right in small things as in great ; and on the other hand, that those who are unjust or sinful in any little every-day action will be likely to do wrong in greater matters.

Q. What then is the only safe way ?

A. To aim and strive to do right in every thing.

Q. What is the purport of verse 11 ?

A. Jesus implies that those who are not faithful, and honest in their dealings with earthly property, cannot receive the " true riches " of heavenly faith, peace, hope, and eternal life.

Q. How are we to understand verse 12 ?

A. Whatever we possess on earth belongs not so much to us as to God, who lends us all things. If we do not remember this, and devote all that we have to him as his servants, but live selfishly, then "our own" peace and heavenly joy will be denied to us.

Q. Are the words "another *man's*" a correct translation from the original ?

A. They are not ; we should read "that which is intrusted to us by another," referring to the gifts of Heaven.

Q. Will you state the meaning of Jesus in verse 13 ?

A. He declares that we can have but one ruling desire, one supreme purpose, one "master" of our hearts ; that if we try to have two, we shall still love one much more than the other ; and that if we would love and serve God heartily, we must be willing to let mammon, or the good things of the earth, go, and deny ourselves, and be content with doing his will, as honor and happiness enough.

Q. Will you state now the application of these truths to the parable of the unjust steward ?

A. We are to be careful so to use our present life that we may gain the life everlasting, and a home in heaven when we die, as the steward used his means to gain a home in the habitations of his friends.

Q. Are we not under much higher motives than he was ?

A. Infinitely higher; inasmuch as spiritual riches, like virtue and piety, are more precious than worldly goods, and eternity is longer than our mortal life.

Q. What, then, is the great lesson of this parable?

A. That we are to seek with far more diligence, all our lives, to be good, pure, just, and devout, than to be comfortable or rich on earth.

Q. What different understanding have some individuals had of this parable?

A. They have supposed it was designed to teach the Jewish Pharisees, that although they boasted they were very wise, — “children of the light,” — in knowing the law of Moses, yet that even in that they had not been so wise as the worldly Gentiles, and therefore that they could not be admitted to the privileges of the “true riches” of the gospel.



LESSON XIV.

PARABLE OF THE RICH MAN AND LAZARUS.

Q. What is one method of finding the *meaning* or *object* of a parable of the Saviour?

A. We may look back and see what was the *occasion* of his uttering it, and judge from that what he wished to teach.

Q. Taking this course, what light may we gain respecting the parable of the rich man and Lazarus, recorded in Luke's Gospel, xvi. 19 – 31 ?

A. We find that this is one of several parables which seem to have been spoken nearly at the same time, namely, those that we have been studying in the last three lessons ; and that what first led Jesus to deliver them was the blame thrown upon him by the scribes and Pharisees because he was kind to publicans and sinners. Luke xv. 1, 2.

Q. What, then, did he probably wish to teach at this time ?

A. That these scribes and Pharisees and other Jews, proud as they were, had really no better claim to the blessings promised in the gospel than other people, like the Gentiles ; and that God would make all those who should only repent of their sins and lead righteous lives to be equally happy.

Q. While this was one truth that he wished to enforce, what other point did he desire now to insist upon, as appears from the lesson preceding this, and from verse 14 of this chapter ?

A. That the love of money is a hateful passion, and that they who indulge it bring on themselves misery hereafter.

Q. As Jesus had just been referring to both of these important truths, what have different persons been led to suppose respecting this parable ?

A. Some have thought that Jesus meant to show in

it that the Jews would have the hard fate of the rich man, and that the Gentiles would be blessed like Lazarus, under the prevalence of the gospel which he came to preach.

Q. What have others thought?

A. That he intended to warn the covetous and luxurious of their future punishment.

Q. What other name is sometimes applied to this parable?

A. It is sometimes called the parable of *Dives* and Lazarus, because *Dives* is the Latin word signifying *rich man*.

Q. What is the meaning of the name *Lazarus* in the original?

A. It means "one who is helped by God."

Q. What do you understand by the expressions used about the rich man in verse 19?

A. When it is said that "he was clothed in purple and fine linen," it is meant that he was in the habit of wearing very costly and showy clothing; and when it is said that he "fared sumptuously every day," we are to understand that he was careful to provide very expensive and delicate food.

Q. How is the poverty of Lazarus touchingly represented in contrast with this great wealth of Dives?

A. See verses 20 and 21.

Q. Was it customary in those days for the poor to receive food in charity at the gates of rich men's houses?

A. It was.

Q. When this poor, diseased beggar died, what became of him ?

A. See verse 22.

Q. What are we to understand when we read that Lazarus was "carried by the angels into Abraham's bosom" ?

A. It is an expression that was used in those days by the Jews to describe a very happy and honorable condition.

Q. Where do you find the history of Abraham, who was always so much revered by the Jewish people, throughout all the period of their existence as a nation ?

A. In Genesis, beginning at the twelfth chapter.

Q. The rich man is represented as dying, and being afterwards in hell ; what is the word for "hell" in the original, and what is its signification ?

A. The word is *Hades*, and it signifies *the place of the dead*, or the place where all the dead were supposed to dwell together.

Q. Does Jesus mean to say that there is such a place as this Hades is described to be ?

A. He does not ; he uses the word as it was used by the men of his time.

Q. Dives and Lazarus being thus represented in the parable as being within sight of each other, and Dives being in torment, what does he ask ?

A. See verse 24.

Q. Why should he say “ *Father Abraham* ” ?

A. All the Jews regarded Abraham as the *father* of their nation.

Q. What reply is given to the rich man, and what reason is assigned for refusing his request ?

A. See verse 25.

Q. However much some of us may suffer on earth more than others, and however unequal our lot may seem here, with regard to sickness, trouble, poverty, &c., what are we to believe respecting our future condition ?

A. That our righteous Father will give us a just recompense, and, just so far as we are good and holy, will afford us peace and enjoyment in proportion to our earthly sorrows.

Q. What other reason is assigned why Lazarus cannot comply with the request of the rich man ?

A. See verse 26.

Q. Must not the good and the bad be for ever really separated from each other, both in this world and the next ?

A. They must be ; their tastes are different ; their affections are different ; their enjoyments are different ; their *hearts* are different ; and however near their bodies may be to one another, *morally* and *spiritually* they can never be really united.

Q. What further request does Dives make ?

A. See verses 27 and 28.

Q. What reply is made to it ?

A. See verses 29 – 31.

Q. If we are not made good by all the Christian opportunities and instructions that we are continually receiving, have we any right to ask for more ?

A. We have not, for we have abundant means of improving now, and we must be hard-hearted if we are not benefited by them.

Q. If all our religious advantages do not help us to be Christians, is it likely that we should be made so by seeing some of our friends who have died appear again among us ?

A. We have no reason to believe that we should, and it would be vain and wicked in us to ask for it.

Q. Without dwelling on the reference Jesus may have had in this parable to the Jews and the Gentiles, and their comparative readiness to put faith in him and his gospel, what is one great practical lesson that we may learn from it ?

A. That under the Christian religion the rich and the poor are both judged according to the goodness of their heart, and not according to the amount of their riches.

Q. If the poorest and the most afflicted here are only virtuous and devout, what must be their condition ?

A. They must have an inward approbation of conscience, and a sweet peace of the soul, that even on earth is worth far more than outward wealth ;

and in heaven, where no earthly riches can follow us, they will be happy for ever.

Q. If the rich are vicious, selfish, and worldly-minded, what must their condition be ?

A. They must have an inward dissatisfaction and uneasiness which all their property cannot save them from, and hereafter they must suffer the painful consequences of their sin.

Q. But may not the rich be pure, and good, and happy ?

A. They may if they will only make the effort, for God will help them.

Q. And are not the poor in danger of being wicked ?

A. They are ; if they yield to their bad passions, and do not labor hard to be righteous, they will fall into iniquity.

Q. What are the words of Scripture that best set forth the law respecting our future life ?

A. "Whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap." Gal. vi. 7, 8.

Q. What do you understand by this ?

A. That goodness must always bring us joy and strength ; that sin must always bring us weakness, and misery, and shame.

Q. What, then, is the only safe way for us all, rich and poor alike ?

A. To love God, follow Christ, and live a holy life ; for thus, and thus only, can we ever hope to be truly happy.

LESSON XV.

PARABLE OF THE SOWER.

Q. Where do you find the parable of the sower ?

A. It is written by Matthew in chap. xiii. of his Gospel, by Mark in chap. iv. of his Gospel, and by Luke in chap. viii. of his Gospel.

Q. What is the reason the accounts given by these three Evangelists are not precisely alike in their language ?

A. Each one of them relied on his own memory, and used such words as occurred to his own mind, without copying the others.

Q. What reason have you for supposing that all of them have given us the parable *substantially* the same as it was delivered by Jesus himself ?

A. The fact, that, while their words are not exactly alike, they all convey the same *sense*, the same *meaning*.

Q. Suppose the three had recorded the parable in precisely the same words, what would you naturally conclude respecting them ?

A. That two of them copied their accounts from the third, or else that they all copied them from some other person ; but now we have the independent testimony of three different writers to show us that Jesus did actually speak this parable.

Q. At what time in his life did Jesus speak it ?

A. Probably after he had been teaching in public nearly a year, and when he was about thirty-two years of age.

Q. Where was he at this time ?

A. He was by the shore of the Sea of Galilee (Matt. xiii. 1), not far from Capernaum. (See map.)

Q. Turning to the account as it is given by Luke, chap. viii., will you read the parable itself, in verses 5 - 8 ?

A. —.

Q. What can you suppose might have suggested this parable to the thoughts of the Saviour ?

A. He might have seen near him the fields where sowers sowed their seed.

Q. He imagines, in verse 5, a sower to be sowing in his field, and to scatter some of his seed by the way-side ; how would this be likely to happen ?

A. In that country the farms belonging to different men were divided from each other by paths or roads, so that the highways passed close by the edge of the ploughed land, and the sower would be very apt to scatter some of his grain into them.

Q. Why would the birds of the air find the grain there, "by the way-side," more than in the field itself ?

A. Because the ground was trodden hard in the path ; but in the field the soil was light and soft, and the seed was soon covered by it.

Q. The reason why this part of the seed sown did not produce any fruit, then, was because it was eaten up by the birds as soon as it was scattered ; what other portion of the seed failed to produce fruit, and why ?

A. That which happened to drop on rocks and stones could not take root, of course, and was soon dried up and spoiled by the sun, verse 6.

Q. What was the difficulty with another part of the seed ?

A. It fell where it had no chance to grow, because the ground was already covered and shaded by thorns or weeds.

Q. What part was really fruitful ? (verse 8.)

A. That which was scattered on the moist and fertile earth which had been ploughed and prepared for it.

Q. What does Jesus mean by the latter part of verse 8 ?

A. He means, as in other places where he uses the same expression, to call particular attention to what he is saying.

Q. When his disciples ask him (verse 9) to explain this parable, what do you understand him to say in reply ? (verse 10.)

A. He says, " You, my disciples, may understand the deep truths and doctrines that I teach (that is, " the mysteries of the kingdom of God ") ; but I am obliged to teach others, less acquainted with

me than you are, by putting my instructions into these simple parables ; for though they see all my wonderful works, yet they have no faith in me, and though they hear my precepts, they do not obey them ; by speaking to them in parables, or attractive stories and comparisons, I may gain their attention."

Q. Will you now read the five following verses, which contain Christ's own explanation of the meaning of this parable ?

A. —.

Q. What then does Christ signify by the "seed" spoken of in this parable ?

A. The instructions of his gospel, — those spiritual truths which he gives us to make our lives pure and good.

Q. What is the "field," or soil, in which these instructions are sown ?

A. The human heart, — all our hearts, — for it is to them he addresses his teachings.

Q. Jesus speaks of four kinds of persons, who hear his truth with very different results ; will you describe the first of these, mentioned in verse 12 ?

A. Those persons belong to this class, who, after they have heard religious instruction, take no pains to remember what they have heard, but let other things take away the good impression from their minds, as the birds caught up the grain that lay on the surface of the road,

Q. What is true of such characters ?

A. They are superficial, empty, and trifling ; for they forget what they hear, and permit worldly vanities to drive away their serious thoughts.

Q. What are you to understand by the phrase “ the devil taketh away the word ” ?

A. That temptations and evil influences, our own bad desires, or our bad companions, prevent our cultivating better feelings.

Q. What is our duty, then, if we wish to “ believe and be saved ” ?

A. To strive to remember all good instructions that we receive, from the Bible, from the minister, from our teachers or parents ; and then to act upon them, carrying them out in our life.

Q. What if you find it hard to do this ?

A. Then I must strive the more earnestly, resist temptation, and pray to God to help me.

Q. In what case would you belong to this class of characters ?

A. If I were to neglect, through the week, the lessons I learn on the Sabbath, instead of practising them in all that I do.

Q. Who are the persons that are compared in this parable to the “ rock ” on which some of the seed fell ? (verse 13.)

A. They are those who go a little farther in the right way than the class before mentioned ; they believe the truth they hear, and begin to practise the good ;

but when they are thrown amidst strong temptations they allow their virtue to be overcome, and fall back into sin.

Q. Why is religious truth on their heart like seed on the rock ?

A. Because it may begin to germinate, or take root, but it is soon dried up and perishes.

Q. What are some of the things which often break up our religious characters, and destroy our virtuous resolutions ?

A. Our selfishness ; our evil passions, like anger and revenge ; thoughtlessness in gay society ; pride in having our own way ; our desire to gratify some wrong appetite.

Q. How ought we to manage these ?

A. We ought to control them all by our Christian principles.

Q. How can we strengthen ourselves in these Christian principles ?

A. By studying the example and precepts of Christ, and having them often in our thoughts, every day.

Q. If we do this, need we be afraid to join our companions and share their amusements ?

A. We need not, for we shall then be safe against temptation.

Q. Who are they whose hearts are like the soil choked with "thorns" ?

A. They are the persons that allow themselves to love money, pleasure, or their earthly business,

more than they love duty and God (verse 14).

Q. If this is their case, will they not be liable to commit sin continually ?

A. They will ; for though their consciences and the Bible both warn them not to do wrong, they will not heed the warning.

Q. Must not this be an awful condition for any soul to be in ?

A. It must make us miserable, and destroy all the peace and glory of the soul.

Q. Would it not be very ungrateful ?

A. It would, for we must remember how much our Heavenly Father and our Saviour have kindly done to lead us in a better course.

Q. When our inclination points one way, and duty another, which shall we obey ?

A. Duty, always, if we would be Christians, and happy here and hereafter.

Q. If we do this, what shall we be like ?

A. Like that " good ground," in which the seeds of truth and goodness take root and grow up into a plant and bear fruit.

Q. What will our hearts be then ?

A. " Honest and good hearts," full of joy, and nobleness, and peace.

Q. If we continue so, choosing duty rather than sin and shame, what will be the spiritual fruit that our lives will bring forth ?

A. Righteous actions and pure affections ; our con-

versation will be kind and true ; we shall be gentle, and upright, and devout.

Q. What, then, shall be your resolution ?

A. That whatever I learn from Christ, I will keep and obey.



LESSON XVI.

PARABLE OF THE TARES.

Q. Where do you find the parable of the tares ?

A. In Matthew's Gospel, xiii. 24 – 30.

Q. It is said, verse 24, that Jesus put forth *another* parable ; what parable had he just delivered ?

A. The parable of the sower, contained in the last lesson.

Q. What makes it appear natural that the one should have suggested and led to the other ?

A. They both relate to the sowing of seed in the field.

Q. Was Jesus probably still standing by the shore of the Sea of Galilee ?

A. He was.

Q. What is that " kingdom of heaven " which Jesus compares here to the man sowing seed ?

A. That phrase has different shades of meaning ; but it seems here to mean " God's method of planting the truth of the gospel in the minds of men."

Q. What is that *truth* represented by in this parable?

A. By the *good seed* which was sown.

Q. What is represented by the "tares" which some enemy came in the night, just after the good seed was sown, and sowed on the same field? (verse 25.)

A. Those bad influences which sometimes come upon our hearts after we have been receiving excellent instruction, — such as the example of wicked persons, or some temptation to do wrong.

Q. In the parable, Christ imagines the wheat which sprung from the good seed, and the tares which sprung from the bad seed that the enemy sowed, to be growing together; why would not this be perceived as soon as they began to grow? (verse 26.)

A. We are told that the stalks or *blades* of the good and bad plants were very much alike in their appearance.

Q. When the servants, or workmen, of this householder, or owner of the land, saw that the tares and wheat were both growing, what did they do?

A. See verse 27.

Q. What does the owner of the land reply to them?

A. He knows that he sowed only the seed of good wheat, and therefore he tells them some enemy must have come secretly and scattered the seed of tares on his field.

Q. What, in fact, are these *tares*?

A. They are weeds which grow in that Eastern country (Judea) where Jesus was speaking; and, though they resemble the wheat in appearance, they bear no fruit, but rather injure the grain.

Q. What do the servants offer to do?

A. To go and pull up these tares at once (verse 28).

Q. What reason does the owner of the field give for not allowing them to do so?

A. He fears that, while they pull up the tares, the roots of the tares will also bring up out of the ground the wheat standing with them (verse 29).

Q. What course does he think a wiser one?

A. See verse 30.

Q. Where does Jesus give an explanation of the meaning of this parable, at the request of his disciples, or followers? (verse 36.)

A. In the same chapter, verses 37 – 43.

Q. According to this explanation, who is the householder, or owner of the land, intended to represent?

A. "The Son of Man," or Jesus Christ our Saviour.

Q. What is the peculiar signification of this title?

A. Jesus often applies it to himself in great humility, to show that he has feelings like all the sons of men, or like all men, and that he can sympathize with their wants, and enter into their sorrows, although he is also the Son of God, and far superior to all mortals in moral power and holiness.

Q. Jesus, then, being the sower of the good seed, in what field does he sow it ?

A. In the world (verse 38), — that is, in the hearts of mankind.

Q. We saw just now that the “good seed” stood in the parable for the good instructions, or good principles, that Jesus *sowed* in human hearts ; but here, in order to explain himself further, he changes his interpretation a little ; what does he put the good seed to signify *here* ?

A. “The children of the kingdom” ; that is, not only the good instructions of the gospel, but those individuals whose characters are *made excellent by these instructions*, and thus made children, or members, of his pure kingdom, or church.

Q. Are not all those who live as Jesus taught us to live “children of his kingdom,” and members of his spiritual church ?

A. They are.

Q. Who are meant by the “tares” ?

A. “The children of the wicked one,” verse 38.

Q. Who are these ?

A. They are those persons who act on bad principles, lead wicked lives, and do not love and imitate Jesus Christ.

Q. What is meant by the “devil” that makes us wicked, or that sows wicked impulses in our hearts ?

A. The word “devil” means *adversary*, and, in

the figurative language of the parable, it signifies *temptation*, whether that temptation springs up from one's own evil desires, or from other persons trying to induce him to do wrong.

Q. Why are all the influences of temptation very properly called an *adversary*, or the "devil"?

A. Because they strive to make us commit sin, and sin is always an *adversary* to our souls, the *enemy* of all our best interests, the *destroyer* of our peace and happiness.

Q. When Jesus says "the harvest is the end of the world," what time does he refer to?

A. By comparing different passages together, many learned students of the Bible have thought that he refers to the end of the religious system then existing in Judea, — the end of the Jewish dispensation, — which took place a few years after Christ spoke these words, when Jerusalem was destroyed by the Roman armies.

Q. What do you understand by the phrase, "the reapers are the angels"?

A. At the harvest there are always reapers; and at this "harvest," when good and bad persons are to be gathered together, like sheaves of grain, to be removed into another scene, those who gather them will be the *angels*, that is, the *messengers*, of God.

Q. If Jesus means by "angels" spiritual and heavenly beings, must he not speak of them in a wholly *figurative* sense?

A. He must, for the angels would not, of course, literally *reap* men ; but the word “angel” means *messenger* ; and God may use, or may permit his Son to use, any of his creatures, on earth and in heaven, as his messengers.

Q. In verses 40 – 42, we are told what will become of the wicked ; why is their future misery described by the Saviour as like that of being burned in “a furnace of fire” ?

A. Because the remorse and shame they will suffer is like the anguish of fire burning the body ; and this image was naturally suggested by his having just said that the *tares* (which stood for the wicked) were cast into the fire.

Q. What do you understand from the expression, “there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth” ?

A. That as these are the actions of persons suffering great pain, so will the wicked manifest their anguish when they look back on their sins against their Heavenly Father.

Q. But, on the other hand, what will be the condition of the good and the righteous at that great “harvest” ?

A. They will be full of joy and brightness of spirit, under the approving smile of their Father in heaven.

Q. What do you learn, on the whole, from this parable ?

A. First, that here on earth we must expect that the good and the evil will dwell together.

Q. But what do you learn beside ?

A. That there must come a time of retribution, — a spiritual “harvest-time,” — when the wicked will be visibly separated from the good ; when the sinful will see their sin, in deep sorrow, and suffer for it ; and when the good will find new joy and new rewards for their obedience.

Q. If there was one such time at the destruction of Jerusalem, and the planting of the Christian religion, pointed out in this parable, are we not to expect other such times ?

A. We are, and especially at our own death.

Q. When you die, how will all your sins appear ?

A. It will fill me with grief and anguish to think of them.

Q. What must be true of every sin you commit ?

A. It hinders my improvement, corrupts the purity of my soul, and prepares suffering for me which I shall be sure to feel at the judgment-seat of God.



LESSON XVII.

PARABLE OF THE GROWING GRAIN.

Q. If you could have been standing by the shore of the Sea of Galilee, in Palestine, one day near the close of Christ's life on earth, what might you have seen there ?

A. I might have seen a multitude of people, of all ranks and ages, gathered in one spot, under the open air, and listening attentively to a teacher who was addressing them in an earnest and solemn manner, with a voice of great gentleness and sincerity.

Q. Who was this teacher ?

A. Jesus, the Son of God, and Saviour of men.

Q. On what subjects did he discourse and teach ?

A. He spoke to those who heard him of their Father in heaven, of their duties, their spiritual natures, and of the life which their souls should live after death.

Q. What may you say of these subjects ?

A. They are the most interesting, and the most sublime, that can possibly engage our attention.

Q. How did the Saviour speak of them ?

A. He spake, we are told, "as never man spake" before ; and we know that none has spoken like him since.

Q. Why was this ?

A. God sent him into the world, that the world might believe him, trust him, and learn from him how to be holy, and thus how to be happy.

Q. Does it not appear that all good persons must have heard a being of so much wisdom and love with delight ?

A. It does, and even the sinful were touched by his kindness and truthfulness, and were led to repent of their sins.

Q. What leads us to rely perfectly on what he said, and believe it ?

A. We have reason to believe, that, being sent by God for this purpose, he had all the needed knowledge to tell us every thing we ought to know respecting all religious topics.

Q. Do not his teachings strike us, of themselves, also, as true and good ?

A. They do, something in our own hearts seems to assure us, that what he said must be true, and designed to make us better.

A. What is another circumstance that makes us confide in Christ and believe on him ?

Q. The fact that he lived himself just as he taught us to live, and practised the virtues which he told us to practise.

Q. How did he live ?

A. Purely, righteously, benevolently, and devoutly.

Q. How does it affect us to see a teacher whose daily conduct is not consistent with his good instructions ?

A. It takes away our confidence in him, because it leaves us to suspect that he is not sincere in what he says.

Q. If good persons loved to gather about Jesus and *hear* him teach when he was on earth, how will good children feel about reading and studying what he said, as it is written in the New Testament ?

A. They will love to do so, and they will be eager to understand the meaning of his words, and treasure them up in their memory.

- Q.** As Jesus stood that day by the Sea of Galilee, how many parables did he deliver ?
- A.** We have an account of eight.
- Q.** Which one of these follows immediately after the parable of the tares, which made the last lesson ?
- A.** The parable of the grain.
- Q.** Have we not had two parables already, delivered by Jesus on that same day, respecting the sowing and growing of grain ?
- A.** We have, and now, following the same train of remark, he introduces a third.
- Q.** Where do you find this parable of the growing grain ?
- A.** It seems to be omitted by Luke and Matthew, but it is recorded by Mark in his Gospel, iv. 26 – 29.
- Q.** What is the meaning of the expression, “the kingdom of God” ? (verse 26.)
- A.** It signifies, as the “kingdom of heaven” does in the parable of the tares, God’s method of planting the instructions of Christ in the hearts of mankind.
- Q.** When these instructions have been received into the heart of a man, what does Christ say they are like ?
- A.** Like seed planted in a good soil.
- Q.** What does Jesus say happens to such seed ?
- A.** It swells, takes root, sends up a green shoot above the surface, and gradually grows till it reaches its full size and bears fruit.

Q. While all this is taking place, has the man who sowed it any thing farther to do with it ?

A. He has not ; it grows, under the care of God's providence, without any farther help from him, verse 27.

Q. When Jesus describes the process of the grain's growing, verse 28, what does he mean by the "blade" ?

A. The green shoot that appears first when the grain rises above the ground.

Q. What is the "ear" ?

A. That part of the wheat that forms on the top of the blade, or stalk, to contain the fruit.

Q. What is the "full corn in the ear" ?

A. The kernels of grain that ripen just before the harvest, and of which the flour is made for bread.

Q. When this is ripe, what does the husbandman do ?

A. See verse 29. He both *sows* and *reaps*, but in the interval he can do nothing to mature his crop.

Q. What seems to have been the object of Jesus in this parable ?

A. To show his disciples that the work of Christian truth in forming a good character is *gradual* ; that it is not all done at once, but that it goes on by successive stages, as wheat grows, until the character is completely formed.

Q. What, then, are we to remember is of the greatest importance ?

A. That we make our hearts like the good soil, and

really receive into them the holy principles of our religion.

Q. If we do not heartily receive them, and thoroughly believe them, will they bring forth fruit, and make us Christians ?

A. They will not, any more than that soil will bear a harvest which is so hard that the seed does not sink into it.

Q. What does this teach us respecting the *beginning* of the Christian life ?

A. That it is of the utmost importance to us, and that we ought to begin in earnest.

Q. When may the Christian life be said to *begin* ?

A. The moment any individual seriously resolves to be a Christian.

Q. When a person forms that resolution after having been thoughtless or indifferent, what is such a change called ?

A. Conversion, or regeneration.

Q. If we have never passed through this change, how can we hope to gain it ?

A. By forsaking our sins, striving continually to be holy, and praying to our Father in heaven to help us.

Q. Then, having begun to be Christians, what does this parable teach us to do next ?

A. To go on, to persevere, to grow better and better every day.

Q. How does the comparison of the grain apply ?

A. As the grain is ever growing higher and more perfect, so should we be ever growing purer, wiser, and more perfect in virtue. See Heb. vi. 1; 2 Pet. i. 5 – 7.

Q. In what respects, particularly, ought our characters to exhibit this *progress*?

A. In our growing more and more humble, more and more truthful and sincere, more and more self-denying, gentle, obedient, and devout.

Q. If, after having pretended to begin the Christian life, we miserably forsake it, and go back to sinful habits, what shall we show?

A. That we did not really take the purpose deeply into our hearts, nor strive earnestly enough to imitate Christ.

Q. What should be our continual aim and endeavour?

A. That as long as we live we may never cease to grow more and more like our Master and Saviour.

Q. If this is our course, what may we hope for, at that great “harvest,” when we shall all rise from the dead and appear before God?

A. That he will welcome us to his presence, and permit us to grow holier and happier in an everlasting life.

LESSON XVIII.

PARABLE OF THE MUSTARD-SEED.

Q. After the parable of the growing grain, what similar one did Jesus put forth ?

A. The parable of the mustard-seed.

Q. Where is this parable recorded ?

A. In Mark iv. 30–32 ; also in Luke xiii. 18, 19 ; and in Matthew xiii. 31, 32.

Q. Will you repeat it as it stands in Mark ?

A. —.

Q. What other passage shows that the mustard-seed here spoken of by Jesus was small ?

A. From Matt. xvii. 20, we should infer that it was spoken of proverbially as something very small.

Q. If it grew to be so large as it is described in verse 32, must it not have been a different kind of mustard from any known now among us ?

A. It must, and travellers state that it was.

Q. Do we find accounts in other books of a kind of mustard so large as this ?

A. There are accounts of a shrub of this name, growing in the Eastern countries, which bears a very small seed, but which lives several years, and grows so high that a man can climb up among the branches.

Q. Jesus compares to this mustard-seed the “ king-

dom of God," verse 30 ; what does he here mean by this ?

A. The gospel itself.

Q. How is the truth of this comparison exemplified ?

A. In the spread of the gospel over the earth.

Q. How did the gospel begin ?

A. Jesus, a despised carpenter from the little village of Nazareth, was at first its only teacher.

Q. Who followed him ?

A. Twelve humble men, from obscure places, and but slightly educated; went forth as his Apostles to preach this religion, and they were everywhere spoken against, persecuted, and treated with contempt.

Q. What would a person looking on, at that time, naturally say that this new religion was like ?

A. It must have appeared so feeble and unlike to live, that he might well have compared it to the little seed.

Q. But what happened soon ?

A. This religion was preached by these twelve men in various cities, and great multitudes of people went to hear them, and believed them, and became Christians.

Q. In the course of a few years, what became true ?

A. Not only large numbers were attached to the Christian faith, but among them were some of the most enlightened and powerful of the earth.

Q. How did it turn out in the course of a few centuries ?

A. All the most important nations in the world were nations where this Christian religion was firmly established.

Q. At this day, are those nations that are not converted to Christianity of much consequence, in knowledge and enterprise, to the rest of the world ?

A. They are not ; they are sadly deficient in those attainments that civilize and refine mankind.

Q. What are these nations called, and where are they found ?

A. They are called heathens, or pagans ; and they are found principally in Africa, Asia, and some distant parts of America.

Q. If, then, the Christian religion has gone on overspreading the earth more and more with its light and its virtues, is it not very much like that mustard-seed that our Lord describes in the parable ?

A. It is, and we see the appropriateness of the comparison.

Q. How did the Saviour know, — since his religion, when he spoke, had made scarcely any progress, — that it was destined to this wonderful success ?

A. He was gifted with divine powers, in knowledge as well as in goodness, and he saw beforehand what would happen after he should be taken up from the earth.

Q. What ought to be our feeling when we consider this glorious progress that Christianity has made ?

A. We should be very thankful to God that his providence has so ordered it.

Q. Why, especially ?

A. Because this religion elevates men's characters, increases their wisdom, and makes them better and happier in a thousand ways.

Q. How shall we be most struck with this fact ?

A. If we look at the vicious, ignorant, and degraded state of all heathen nations.

Q. How should we feel towards those heathens ?

A. We should pity them, and use all the means in our power to make them Christians.

Q. What *personal* reasons for gratitude have you ?

A. I should be very thankful that I was born and live among Christian people, and enjoy Christian privileges, — and not among the pagans, who worship images of wood and stone, or the sun and moon.

Q. But, having these superior advantages, what ought you to be in consequence of them ?

A. I ought to be as much holier in my life, as my opportunities are better.

Q. Can you not give this parable an application to your own improvement in goodness ?

A. I can ; and it certainly teaches me that *my* faith and *my* goodness ought to increase daily, as the mustard-seed grew in size.

Q. How was Jesus an example for *you* and all children in this respect ?

A. I read in Luke ii. 52, that, when he was about

twelve years old, he increased not only in "stat-
ure," or in size, but also in "wisdom," and, by
his virtue, "in favor with God and man."

LESSON XIX.

PARABLE OF THE LEAVEN.

Q. What is "leaven" ?

A. It is the substance used in raising dough for bread,
commonly called yeast.

Q. Where do you find the parable in which Jesus
compares the kingdom of heaven, or the kingdom
of God, to this leaven.

A. Luke writes it in his Gospel, in chap. xiii. 20, 21,
and Matthew, in chap. xiii. 33.

Q. What do you infer from the fact that Luke says
Jesus compared *the kingdom of God* to the leaven,
while Matthew says that he compared *the kingdom
of heaven* to the leaven ?

A. That those two expressions, "the kingdom of
God," and "the kingdom of heaven," mean the
same thing, and may be used for each other.

Q. What may we take either and both of them to
mean in this case ?

A. The gospel of Jesus Christ, or the religious truth,
or the spiritual *doctrine*, of that gospel.

Q. What is the "gospel" ?

A. The message Christ brought, from God his Father, into this world, showing us how we may be saved from sin.

Q. What is the meaning of "doctrine"?

A. Doctrine means *something taught*; and a doctrine of the gospel is *something that Christ taught in his gospel*, or in his message to mankind.

Q. In what other passages do we find *doctrine*, or *teachings*, compared to leaven?

A. In Matt. xvi. 6, 12.

Q. Jesus speaks of the leaven as being put into three measures of meal; how much were *three measures*?

A. One measure was a peck and a half; three measures were four pecks and a half.

Q. Why does he mention this quantity?

A. Because it was the quantity commonly used at once for making bread.

Q. How was bread baked among the Jews?

A. Sometimes in the ashes (see 1 Kings xix. 6), sometimes on the hearth (see Gen. xviii. 5), and also in ovens, made probably of stones, and not resembling ours (see Lev. ii. 4).

Q. When yeast, or leaven, is placed in the dough that is made of meal, or flour, how does it operate?

A. The yeast spreads and diffuses its influence through the whole mass of dough, till it *raises* it, or *makes it light*. See 1 Cor. v. 6; Gal. v. 9.

Q. Is this precisely what Jesus says of it, and what makes the comparison appropriate ?

A. It is.

Q. How is it that the gospel is like this leaven ?

A. When once it has been made known to the minds of mankind, it goes on spreading itself more and more, and changing the lives of multitudes of people.

Q. Had this happened when Jesus spoke these words ?

A. It had not, for he had preached the gospel in but few places, and but few persons, comparatively, had heard of it.

Q. How, then, could he say what he does in this parable ?

A. He was a prophet, and knew what would happen after he should have departed from the earth, namely, that his truth would be believed, and his life be imitated, more and more, as long as the world should stand.

Q. Has this proved true, so far, in history ?

A. It has.

Q. How much time has passed since the Saviour departed from the earth.

A. More than eighteen hundred years.

Q. And has his gospel been spreading through all this period ?

A. On the whole it has, and by the efforts of Christians, and the blessing of God, some are brought to believe and obey it continually.

Q. What have we reason to hope may happen at some future day ?

A. That the glorious and happy time will come when there will be no heathens on the earth, but when all men shall have a true knowledge of their Heavenly Father, of Jesus Christ their Saviour, and of his holy gospel.

Q. Are we not encouraged to cherish this hope by the Bible ?

A. We are, and also by our faith in the good providence of God.

Q. What is it our duty to do in the matter ?

A. To strive in every way to bring on that time.

Q. How can we do so ?

A. By being good Christians, and imitating Christ ourselves, and thus showing others what a noble and beautiful thing it is to follow him.

Q. In what other way may we forward this object ?

A. By embracing every good opportunity to help in giving religious instruction to the ignorant and the sinful.

Q. We have gained, then, one clear explanation of this parable, and of this comparison of the gospel to leaven ; will you state it in one sentence ?

A. As a little leaven *raises* a large mass of meal, so does the Christian religion spread from one heart to another, and from one nation to another, till it changes the life of all mankind, and purifies, reforms, and saves the world.

Q. What other lesson may you practically learn from this parable ?

A. That religion was meant to operate in any individual's character, as it does in the world at large, namely, to change it more and more perfectly from evil to good, till the character is made thoroughly Christian.

Q. Should we ever be satisfied till this has taken place ?

A. We should not.

Q. What is one thing about yourself that you should seek to have imbued with a Christian spirit, and governed by Christian principles ?

A. My deportment to those about me every day, making it gentle.

Q. What is another ?

A. My dispositions, making me kind and amiable.

Q. What is another ?

A. My conversation, making it free from falsehood, slander, or profanity.

Q. How should your religion make you to feel and act towards your parents ?

A. To love them, obey them, and seek to please them.

Q. When you are called on to transact business, what should it make your actions in that respect ?

A. Honest, upright, open, and fair.

Q. How should it make you feel towards the sick, the poor, the oppressed, and the afflicted ?

A. It should prompt me to pity them, and be ready to help them.

Q. How should it dispose you towards Jesus Christ?

A. It should make me very thankful that he brought this gospel; that he suffered so much when he was on earth, in order to make men believe on him, and feel the truth of what he said; and it should fill me with a resolute desire to imitate him.

Q. How should it make you feel towards God your Heavenly Father?

A. It should make me thankful to him for sending his Son to be the Saviour of men, and for all his other innumerable mercies to me and my friends; and it should lead me to love him, and always endeavour to please him by obeying his commandments, as they are written in the Bible.



LESSON XX.

PARABLES OF THE TREASURE IN A FIELD, AND OF THE PEARL OF GREAT PRICE.

Q. Will you repeat Matt. xiii. 44, containing the parable of the treasure hid in a field?

A. ———.

Q. What was probably meant by this. "treasure"?

A. A mine, of silver or some other precious metal or precious stone, concealed under the ground.

Q. When the man had discovered that there was such a mine in a field which was not his own, what is he represented as doing?

A. Hiding it.

Q. How could he "hide" it?

A. The meaning is that he kept it concealed, or rather he kept his knowledge of it concealed, and did not tell others that the mine was there.

Q. What is meant by the expression, "for the joy thereof"?

A. In the joy that he felt at the prospect of gaining possession of so much wealth as this mine would yield him.

Q. What means did he take to get possession of it?

A. He bought the whole field where the treasure was.

Q. Why did he *sell all that he had*?

A. To provide himself with money sufficient to purchase the field.

Q. Suppose he had told the owner of the field his reason for wishing to buy it, or had offered to buy the mine by itself, is it probable the owner would have parted with it as he did?

A. It is not; but being ignorant of the value of what was in his land, he sold it for less than it was worth.

Q. Does Jesus imply that it was right for this man to keep back what he knew for the sake of making a good bargain, and taking advantage of the owner?

A. He does not; on the contrary, we know from the

whole strain of his teachings, and from the perfect justice and fairness of all his actions, that he would look upon such a transaction with abhorrence, as being dishonest and base.

Q. What, then, does he intend to teach by this comparison ?

A. That the gospel is more precious than any mine, or any money, and that we ought to be more anxious to have it in our hearts than men of business are to secure a fortune.

Q. What is one of two facts, especially, that should make us more eager to gain the goodness and truth of the gospel than earthly riches ?

A. Goodness and truth last for ever, and yield everlasting pleasure, while earthly riches perish, and part from us when we die.

Q. What is the other of these facts ?

A. Goodness and truth are spiritual possessions, and therefore cannot fail to give us satisfaction, while earthly goods often bring as much trouble, anxiety, and sorrow, as enjoyment.

Q. Ought you ever to take advantage of another person's ignorance, to profit yourself at his expense ?

A. Never ; such an act is mean and contemptible.

Q. Suppose that, when you are buying an article of another person, you know of some circumstance about it which he does not know, but which, if he did know it, would make him ask a higher price for it, what ought you to do ?

A. I ought to consider whether he has had fair means of knowing what I know; and if he has not, I ought to tell him, and then make my bargain afterwards, even though I should be obliged to pay more than if I had kept my secret.

Q. Suppose you had occasion to sell some article, and you knew of some circumstance about it which the buyer did not know, but which, if he did know it, would diminish the value of the article in his estimation, what ought you to do?

A. I ought to consider whether he has had fair means of knowing what I know, and if he has not, I ought to inform him, even though I should receive a smaller price from him in consequence.

Q. What would such a course of conduct be?

A. Perfectly honorable, fair, and true.

Q. What may you say of those who pursue such conduct?

A. That they do business on noble and Christian principles.

Q. How do you learn that this high standard of dealing is correct?

A. My conscience, and the religion of Jesus, tell me that it is.

Q. What parable, having very much the same object with this one, is related in verses 45 and 46 of this chapter?

A. The parable of the pearl of great price.

Q. Is it meant that the "kingdom of heaven," or the

"gospel," is like the ~~man~~ seeking the pearls, or rather like the precious pearl itself?

A. It is like the pearl itself.

Q. What is a "pearl"?

A. It is a small ornament obtained from the shell of a kind of oyster, of a whitish color, and having a peculiar lustre.

Q. It seems that in order to purchase this one "pearl of great price," the merchant was obliged to part with all his goods; how costly have pearls sometimes been?

A. There is an account of one which was purchased for about forty thousand dollars.

Q. Where have the most beautiful pearls been obtained?

A. In Arabia, and at the isle of Ceylon.

Q. What does Jesus teach us by this parable?

A. That we ought to prize his gospel as infinitely more valuable than the rarest pearl, or the costliest gem.

Q. What other passage of Scripture may this remind us of?

A. Proverbs iii. 13-15.

Q. What is meant by the "wisdom" spoken of there?

A. The wisdom which leads us to love God, and practise virtue.

Q. For what, likewise, are we chiefly to prize the gospel?

A. Because it shows us how worthy to be loved is our Heavenly Father, how ready he is to forgive our sins when we repent; and it teaches us how to live righteously, and thus to gain immortal life.

Q. What, now, is the chief lesson you are to learn from these two parables?

A. That I ought never to prefer any thing else to the approbation of my Maker.

Q. How will you be most sure to gain that approbation?

A. By following the example of Jesus Christ

Q. Suppose that you could not do your whole duty without denying yourself some pleasure that your heart was set upon, what would your duty be?

A. To deny myself that pleasure at once, and do my duty.

Q. What if you could gain money, or admiration, or some luxury, by doing wrong, — as by telling a falsehood, or disobeying your parents?

A. I should scorn to purchase either wealth, or the favor of other people, at that wicked price.

Q. When any thing else comes into conflict with the precepts of Christ, so that you must choose one or the other, what should your choice be?

A. To follow his precepts, which is always safe and good, however great the sacrifice it costs.

Q. How should you always value *duty*?

A. Like the “treasure” and the “pearl” in the

parable, — so precious to my heart that I should be willing to part with *all I have* beside, rather than forsake it.

LESSON XXI.

PARABLE OF THE NET.

- Q.** How many of the parables that we have last examined were probably delivered by Jesus on the same day?
- A.** Seven; and the parable of the net, which seems to have been the last delivered on that day, makes the eighth.
- Q.** Will you repeat the circumstances under which Christ spoke these parables?
- A.** He was by the shore of the Sea of Galilee, sitting in a vessel near the shore, while the multitudes of people that he addressed were standing and listening to him on the banks. See Matt. xiii. 1, 2.
- Q.** What is the first of these parables, and what does it teach?
- A.** The parable of the sower, which teaches how the doctrines of the gospel are received in the hearts of different persons.
- Q.** What is the second, and what does it teach?
- A.** The parable of the tares, teaching us that though

the good and the bad must live together on earth, yet there is a moral separation between them which must hereafter divide their souls, even as the wheat is gathered into barns, but the tares are burned up with fire.

Q. What is the third, and its lesson.

A. The parable of the growing grain, which shows that we must take the gospel earnestly into our hearts, in order that it may grow in us and gradually change our lives, and bear the fruit of virtuous actions.

Q. What is the fourth, and its lesson ?

A. The parable of the mustard-seed, which illustrates the *progressive* nature of Christianity, or how, from small beginnings, it reaches great results in improving the character, and converting the world.

Q. What is the fifth, and what does it teach ?

A. The parable of the leaven, which shows the *diffusive* nature of our Christian faith, and how it spreads through the heart, or through the community where it is welcomed.

Q. What are the sixth and seventh, and their lesson ?

A. The parables of the treasure in the field, and of the pearl of great price, teaching us the unspeakable worth and preciousness of Christian truth, and its superiority over every other possession.

Q. What, now, is the eighth, and what does it show ?

A. The parable of the net, which shows, like the parable of the tares, that though the gospel will

gather into the church on earth both good and bad, yet that these must finally be separated, and only the good enter heaven. See Matt. xiii. 47 – 50.

Q. Can you think of any circumstance that should have suggested to the mind of Jesus this parable concerning a net and fishing?

A. He was speaking in a vessel, which was, very likely, a fishing-vessel, on a sea where many fish were caught, and perhaps within sight of nets spread out to be dried.

Q. What should we learn from this custom of our Lord, of drawing out religious lessons from common events and familiar objects?

A. To make such things remind *us* of our duties and our spiritual improvement.

Q. Looking at this parable of the net, what would naturally happen if a net were dragged through the water, as described in verse 47?

A. It would gather into it various sorts of fish, — large and small, good and bad, and bring them all to the shore together.

Q. What is done when these fish of various kinds are brought to land?

A. See verse 48.

Q. What are these fish then compared to? (verse 49.)

A. To those persons, good and bad, who belong, or pretend to belong, to the company of Christian believers.

Q. What will happen at last, when God shall send forth his messengers ?

A. The wicked shall be separated from the good, and while the good are made happy by their holiness, the wicked will be made miserable by their sins.

Q. What is that feeling which makes a bad child, or a bad man, miserable, when he looks back on the sins he has committed, in his words, and thoughts, and conduct ?

A. The accusation of his conscience, or remorse.

Q. Why is one who is suffering this inward torment said to be "cast into a furnace of fire" ?

A. Because his sufferings will be such as we cannot fully conceive of now, and will be like the torment of being burned alive.

Q. Were persons actually burned in those days ?

A. Persons guilty of great crimes were burned, as their punishment.

Q. What do you understand by verse 50 ?

A. It is descriptive of those horrible agonies which sin must some time bring upon the guilty soul.

Q. After Jesus had finished these parables, what question did he put to those who had listened to them ?

A. See verse 51.

Q. And what did they reply ?

A. See verse 51.

Q. What meaning has the word "scribe" in verse 52 ?

- A.** It means "scholar."
- Q.** What is meant by the phrase, "instructed unto the kingdom of heaven"?
- A.** "Instructed to know what the kingdom of heaven is, and what the gospel contains," as these parables had shown.
- Q.** What does Jesus say that a Christian who knows this is like?
- A.** See verse 52.
- Q.** Why is he like this householder?
- A.** Because he is thoroughly furnished with spiritual knowledge, as the householder is with earthly treasures.
- Q.** What did Jesus do after he had spoken all these beautiful instructions to the people?
- A.** See verse 53.

LESSON XXII.

PARABLE OF THE MAN WITH MANY GOODS.

- Q.** Where did Jesus go after that day when he delivered the eight preceding parables?
- A.** To Nazareth, the village where he was brought up. See Matt. xiii. 54.
- Q.** Where is Nazareth?
- A.** (See map of Palestine.)
- Q.** In what direction is it from the Sea of Galilee,

where Jesus had been teaching ; and from Perea, where he taught before that ?

A. (See map.)

Q. What is the parable next delivered by him, after he came into the region of Nazareth ?

A. The parable of the man with many goods.

Q. Where is this parable recorded ?

A. Luke xii. 16 – 21.

Q. What caused Christ to put forth this parable ?

A. Some one came and asked that the family estate might be divided between his brother and himself, — probably with a desire to get really more than his share (verse 13).

Q. Why should he ask Jesus to make this division ?

A. Because he perceived that Jesus had great authority, and that others would obey his word.

Q. Did this man probably perceive what the authority of Christ arose from, — namely, his sincerity, truth, and the divine works that he wrought for a spiritual purpose ?

A. Probably not.

Q. What is the meaning of Christ's reply in verse 14 ?

A. That his office was not to judge and decide questions about property ; but to do the far higher work of teaching religious and spiritual truth.

Q. What does he then tell those about him to beware of ?

A. Covetousness,

Q. What is "covetousness" ?

A. An eager passion for accumulating money or property.

Q. Does it seem from this, that Jesus perceived something of this bad passion in the individual who had just spoken to him ?

A. It does.

Q. What do you understand by the expression, "a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth" ?

A. That our deepest life and true happiness do not depend on the amount of our property, or our luxuries.

Q. What do they depend on ?

A. On our faithfulness in doing our duty, and our faith in God.

Q. What, then, is the direct object of this parable ?

A. To enforce the truth just stated.

Q. Is it implied that the rich man was guilty of any wrong in acquiring his wealth ?

A. It is not ; his soil was fruitful (verse 16).

Q. What do you infer from verses 17 and 18 ?

A. That his crops were so plentiful that he had no place to store them in.

Q. What does he resolve to do ?

A. See verse 18.

Q. How would the meaning of verse 19 be made more plain ?

- A.** By placing the word "self," instead of the word "soul."
- Q.** What appears from this verse?
- A.** That the rich man was a very thoughtless, empty-minded, and irreligious person.
- Q.** What does he propose to do, that is unworthy of a man, and an immortal being?
- A.** To give himself up to his low appetites, to eating, and drinking, and idleness.
- Q.** What might you infer from his language to himself?
- A.** That he expected to live in this world for ever.
- Q.** What terrible warning did he receive which startled him out of this sensual state?
- A.** God speaks to him, and tells him that on that very night he should die (verse 20).
- Q.** What is the force of the question at the end of that verse?
- A.** To show that at the moment of his death his possessions could be his no longer, but he must leave them all behind him.
- Q.** What must be the rich man's feeling at this announcement?
- A.** Disappointment, shame, and terror.
- Q.** How does Jesus give us the lesson of this parable?
- A.** By saying that all those who selfishly strive to make themselves comfortable, neglecting others, and forgetting God, will be like this miserable man,

Q. What is meant by being "rich toward God"?

A. Those are "rich toward God" who love him, and keep his commandments.

Q. If we do this, need we be afraid when we are told that we must die?

A. We need not, because then we may be sure of being safe and happy with God after we die.

Q. What is the difference, then, between the worldly-minded person and the religious person, when both come to die?

A. The first will be separated for ever from what he loves most, because he loves earthly things most; while the good man, who has found his chief pleasure in duty, faith, and love, will carry these with him, in his soul, into the other world.

Q. What is the only thing that makes dying really fearful?

A. Sin; but if we are good, we can look forward to death calmly and cheerfully.

Q. Might not this rich man have kept himself from becoming so much bound up in his riches and luxury?

A. He might if he had chosen; and then he might have been a good man, and lived virtuously and died peacefully.

Q. How might he have done this?

A. By cultivating his religious character, praying to God, and being benevolent to his fellow-men.

Q. If we find ourselves becoming selfish, how can we resist that tendency?

A. By taking pains to make sacrifices for the sake of others, and by devoting ourselves to rendering them happy.

Q. If we do this, what may we hope for ?

A. God will look upon us with favor and bless us ; for he loves those that love their fellow-creatures.

Q. What other passage teaches us the same solemn lesson with this parable ?

A. Matt. xvi. 26.

Q. What is the main object of the beautiful words of Jesus that follow this parable, — through verse 31 ?

A. He continues to compare anxiety for earthly things with the nobler anxiety to be pure and holy.

Q. What does he say respecting anxiety for earthly things ?

A. That we should do all our duty, and then leave the result entirely to our kind Heavenly Father.

Q. But while we are comparatively indifferent to worldly possessions, what does he say we should seek, earnestly and continually ?

A. “ The kingdom of God ” ; that is, to obey the precepts of the gospel, and follow our Saviour in holiness of life ; and then we may hope to enter, when we die, into the glory and happiness of heaven.

LESSON XXIII. ?

PARABLE OF THE MASTER AND HIS SERVANTS.

Q. What parable follows immediately after that of the man with many goods ?

A. That of the master and his servants.

Q. In what respect does this resemble the preceding ?

A. In showing how we are to be truly prepared for change and death.

Q. What is the extent of the whole passage, including this parable ?

A. Luke xii., from verse 35 to verse 48.

Q. Whom is each one of us compared to in this parable ?

A. To a servant whose master is absent from home at a wedding.

Q. How ought such a servant to conduct ?

A. He ought to "watch" for his master's return, and be ready to receive him and wait upon him the moment he arrives (verses 35 - 38).

Q. What is meant by the phrase "having the loins girded" ?

A. It is an allusion to a custom of the East, where servants who wait at table wear long robes drawn up, or *girded* up, about their persons.

Q. If a servant were thus clothed, and had his lamps

lighted or "burning," what would he be ready to do when his master should arrive ?

A. To open the door and do his master's bidding.

Q. What are the *watches* mentioned in verse 38 ?

A. The night was divided, when this was said, into four watches, of three hours each, — the first commencing at six o'clock in the evening, the second at nine o'clock in the evening, the third at midnight, and the fourth at three o'clock in the morning.

Q. If the master arrived, then, in the "second watch," or the "third watch," at what time would he arrive ?

A. If in the "second watch," between nine o'clock and midnight ; if in the third, between midnight and three o'clock.

Q. What is the design of verse 39 ?

A. To show the importance of being always watchful and prepared, that we may be guarded against evil as against a thief.

Q. What is probably signified by that "coming of the Son of Man," which Jesus tells his followers to be always ready for ?

A. Probably that period of trial, suffering, and change that came when Jerusalem was destroyed.

Q. If he thought it important for his followers to be seriously *ready* for *that* trial, is it not at least equally important for each one of us to be prepared for the solemn hour of death ?

A. It is ; and this is the application we are to make of his words.

Q. How is it true that this and other great changes come at an *hour when we think not* ?

A. They are generally sudden, — not fully foreseen.

Q. What does the Saviour describe in verses 42 – 44 ?

A. The character of the good servant, who *does* watch and wait for his master's arrival.

Q. What does he say is the reward of such a servant ?

A. That he is promoted to the office of steward, and intrusted with the care of all the household.

Q. How is the wicked and unfaithful servant said to conduct ?

A. To indulge in all sorts of violence, wastefulness, and excess, because his master is out of sight (verse 45).

Q. What is the fearful end of such a servant ?

A. See verse 46.

Q. Who of us are like this wicked servant, and must expect to share in his misery and shame ?

A. Those who are careless about their duty, and who do not make earnest efforts to lead Christian lives.

Q. What is the import of verses 47 and 48 ?

A. That just in proportion as we *know* what is right, we are under solemn obligations to *do* what is right.

Q. Does not this require us, who have so many re-

ligious opportunities and privileges, to lead very holy lives ?

A. It does, and we should never be satisfied with ourselves, as God can never be satisfied with us, unless we improve our many advantages.

Q. What are some of these advantages that we enjoy ?

A. We live where we are instructed, every week, in the religion of Jesus Christ ; we have friends who show us how we ought to live ; and we have before us many excellent examples that we may imitate.

Q. What, now, is the great lesson you may derive from this parable ?

A. That it is my duty to be prepared for every change of condition, and especially for the last change, death.

Q. How are you to be prepared for it ?

A. By doing the will of my Maker.

Q. How will this prepare you for death ?

A. It will make me sure of his approbation and his support ; and if I have this I am prepared for any thing.

Q. Can death be really terrible to those that are good ?

A. It cannot, for they trust in their Heavenly Father, who will be their Friend after death.

Q. Provided you love your fellow-men and your God, how may you meet death ?

A. Calmly and happily, for I know that *then* death cannot harm me.

Q. What will the change of death then do for you ?

A. I may hope that it will only cause my body to decay, but will remove my soul, which is really myself, into a purer and fairer world.



LESSON XXIV.

PARABLE OF THE BARREN FIG-TREE.

Q. When was this parable of the barren fig-tree probably delivered ?

A. Not long after the parable of the last lesson.

Q. Where was Jesus at this time ?

A. He was still in Galilee.

Q. Which of the four Evangelists gives an account of this parable, and where ?

A. Luke, in chap. xii., verses 6 – 9 of his Gospel.

Q. How do we learn what called it forth ?

A. By looking at the preceding verses of the chapter.

Q. What did some persons remind Jesus of at this time ?

A. Of Pilate's commanding some Galileans to be put to death by the sword, at the very moment when they were offering sacrifices in the temple, so that their blood flowed down, and was "mingled with their sacrifices."

Q. Who was Pilate ?

A. He was a cruel and obstinate man, at that time governor of Judea, being sent from Rome by the Roman government to fill that office. See Matt. xxvii. 2.

Q. Why should the governor of Judea be sent from Rome ?

A. Because Judea was then a province, subject to the Roman empire.

Q. What did Jesus say to those who reminded him of Pilate's killing those Galileans ?

A. He said that many other Galileans really deserved such punishment as much as those who suffered it (verse 2).

Q. Was not this a very fearless and cutting rebuke ?

A. It was, for Jesus was at that moment speaking to Galileans.

Q. What other case of the destruction of human life does Jesus mention ?

A. Of the falling of a tower, built probably over the pool of Siloam at Jerusalem (John ix. 7), which crushed eighteen persons.

Q. What does he say, in verses 3 and 5, with reference to those that perished in these ways ?

A. That among those who heard him speak were many, who, unless they repented of their sins, must perish as miserably.

Q. Whom did he especially warn by these words ?

A. The Jewish nation.

Q. What made the Jewish nation at that time so deserving of severe punishments ?

A. They had grown corrupt, sinful in their lives, and hypocritical in their religion ; and because the Saviour preached righteousness to them, and reproved their sins, they soon after put him to death on the cross.

Q. Having thus uttered a solemn warning to this people, Jesus enforces it by a parable ; will you read or repeat that parable ?

A. —.

Q. Whom does the man that planted the fig-tree in the vineyard represent, in the parable ?

A. God, who plants the nations on earth.

Q. What particular nation is intended by this fig-tree ?

A. The Jews.

Q. What was the great sin of the Jews ?

A. As the tree bore no fruit in figs, so they did not bear fruit in righteous actions.

Q. Who may be meant by the “ dresser,” or gardener, of the vineyard ?

A. His Son, our Saviour.

Q. What does the owner of the vineyard say to the dresser ?

A. (Verse 7.)

Q. What do you understand by the expression, “ Why cumbereth it the ground ? ”

A. “ Why should this tree, which bears no fruit, be

allowed to stand here and *cumber*, or *occupy uselessly*, the ground, when a fruitful tree might be planted in its place ? ”

Q. Will you put the meaning of this into other language, as it would be applied to the Jewish nation ?

A. “ Why should this nation, which, after all the religious privileges they have enjoyed, continue selfish and proud, be allowed to stand in their power, setting a bad example before others, and thus cumbering the earth ? ”

Q. What is the “ dresser ” represented as urging, in behalf of this people, in verses 8 and 9 ?

A. As pleading that they may be spared from destruction yet a little longer, that some new efforts may be made to awaken them to their duty, and make them repent and be saved.

Q. What do we learn from history respecting the fulfilment of these warnings to the Jews ?

A. A few years after they were indeed “ cut down ” ; the Roman armies came and completely destroyed their chief city, Jerusalem, and butchered men, women, and children ; so that they actually perished very much like those whom Pilate killed, and those on whom the tower of Siloam fell.

Q. Has not this parable an application to us also ?

A. It has ; for God’s law is over us, as well as over the Jews.

Q. What does it teach you ?

A. That unless I improve my opportunities, and grow

in goodness, I must look for a terrible judgment from my God.

Q. What is your great opportunity ?

A. That of continually improving in knowledge and virtue.

Q. What is your great privilege ?

A. That of having religious instruction, knowing the teachings and life of Christ, and being surrounded by good examples.

Q. If, then, you do not grow better, but cling to your sinful ways and low passions, what are you ?

A. But a cumberer of the ground, unworthy to fill my place here, which God intended for his good children.

Q. What, then, ought to be your resolution to-day ?

A. That I will sincerely repent of all the evil I have done, and be changed into a truly virtuous child of God.

Q. If you do this, what has your Heavenly Father promised ?

A. That I shall have peace in my soul, and that he will bless me in this life and the life to come.

LESSON XXV.

PARABLE OF THE BREAD.

- Q.** What wonderful work of the Saviour is recorded in the first part of the sixth chapter of John's Gospel?
- A.** The miracle by which he fed five thousand persons with five loaves of bread and two fishes.
- Q.** Where was this miracle performed?
- A.** On the northern shore of the Sea of Galilee, near a city called Bethsaida. See map, and also Luke ix. 10.
- Q.** How was Jesus occupied there?
- A.** (See Luke ix. 11.)
- Q.** Where had he been, just before this?
- A.** On the western shore of the Sea of Galilee, near Nazareth.
- Q.** What do we learn that Jesus did the night after he performed this miracle?
- A.** See John, chap. vi., from verse 16 to verse 21.
- Q.** Where, then, was he on the following day?
- A.** At, or near, Capernaum.
- Q.** What direction must he have taken to pass from Bethsaida to Capernaum?
- A.** (See map.)
- Q.** Did the multitude follow after him?
- A.** (See verses 22 - 25.)

Q. What motive did Jesus accuse them of (verse 26) in following him ?

A. Of a desire to obtain food for the body.

Q. What admonition does he give them in verse 27 ?

A. That they should be less anxious to gratify their earthly appetites, than to gain truth, which is the bread of the mind.

Q. What does he tell them this spiritual truth, which is the nourishment of the soul, will do for them ?

A. It will give them everlasting life, as what is eaten for food supports, in the body, its earthly life.

Q. How does he say we may obtain this truth to nourish our souls ?

A. By believing on him, the Saviour, and obeying his words ; for his Father in heaven had " sealed," or sent, him that he might teach and save us.

Q. When the people ask him (verse 28) what works they shall do that will be pleasing to God, what does he reply ?

A. That they should believe on him whom God sent to be their Saviour, even Jesus Christ.

Q. What is meant by *believing* on this Saviour ?

A. Taking what he said to be true, trusting in his promises, practising the virtues he inculcated, and imitating his holy life.

Q. If we really heartily believe in Christ, shall we not obey his precepts ?

A. We must.

Q. And if we do this, what will his doctrines be ?

- A.** Like bread to the body, giving life and energy to our souls in this world and after our bodies are dead.
- Q.** What did these people allude to, when they said, "Our fathers did eat manna in the desert"?
- A.** To the fact that their ancestors, the Israelites, lived on manna when they were travelling through the wilderness from Egypt to Palestine. (See Exodus xvi.)
- Q.** What was this manna, so kindly provided by Providence for the Israelites?
- A.** It was a nourishing substance, found on the leaves and bark of trees, in those Eastern countries.
- Q.** What does Jesus say of this manna, and of Moses, who was the leader of those Israelites when they received it?
- A.** That Moses did not give them the *true bread* from heaven, either in manna or in his laws.
- Q.** What, then, is the *true bread* from heaven?
- A.** It is that truth which Christ alone brought from heaven, showing us how to live righteously.
- Q.** In this sense, how is Jesus said to be the "bread of God," in verse 33?
- A.** His example and words are the nourishment, or *bread*, which God gives to our souls.
- Q.** When the people ask him to give them that bread, what does he answer?
- A.** That he *does* give it to them, because he gives *himself* to make them good, and *he* is that bread.

Q. What do you understand by the figurative language in verse 35?

A. That as the body, when it has eaten and drunken enough, feels no more hunger or thirst, so whoever takes Jesus for his pattern, and keeps his words, will not feel any inward want, but will be satisfied.

Q. What is the only thing that can really satisfy our souls?

A. Goodness like that of Christ.

Q. How did the Jews mistake the meaning of Jesus (verses 41, 42) when he said he came down from heaven?

A. They supposed he meant that he bodily came down from above the sky, while he really meant that he was sent with his heavenly spirit into this world, for a special purpose, by God.

Q. Where does he repeat what he had just said, and enlarge upon it?

A. In verses 48 to 58.

Q. What is the meaning of verses 49 and 50?

A. That manna and bread support the body only for a time, but cannot prevent its dying at last; while the soul that loves and follows Christ never dies, but lives on in glory after the body has decayed.

Q. What are we to understand when Jesus says (verse 51) that he gives his flesh for the life of the world?

A. That he devoted all his life, and at last died on

the cross, to make men believe the truth, and live virtuously and religiously.

Q. How is it that the good have eternal life ?

A. They find their continual delight in doing right, and right is eternal.

Q. How else may you state it ?

A. They devote themselves to pleasing God, and God is eternal.

Q. But how does it appear that *you* will live for ever, — that *your* life will be eternal, — if you are good ?

A. Because then I shall have brought out my good principles, and my good affections, and these never perish.

Q. What do you mean when you say that goodness, or right, or that good souls, are *eternal* ?

A. That they cannot be destroyed ; and though the whole earth, and all that we see, should vanish away, *these* would remain, and have an everlasting life in the spiritual world.

Q. What, then, should be your grand object now ?

A. Not so much to provide bodily comforts, as to live an excellent life, and thus to “lay hold on eternal life.”

LESSON XXVI. 2

PARABLE OF THE FOOD EATEN WITH UNWASHEN HANDS.

Q. What took place immediately after Jesus delivered the parable contained in the last lesson ?

A. (See Matt. xv. 1, 2.)

Q. Who were these " scribes and Pharisees " that came to Jesus ?

A. They were persons who paid more attention to the external ceremonies of the Jewish religion than to their spiritual duties to God and men.

Q. How did these persons regard Jesus ?

A. With jealousy and hatred.

Q. Why was this ?

A. Because they saw that his teachings were calculated to overturn their notions, and draw men away from their schools.

Q. What did Jesus teach them ?

A. That to forsake their sins, and be just and merciful, was of far greater importance than to sit still, disputing about knotty questions in the old Jewish law.

Q. What accusation did they bring against Jesus at this time ?

A. That he allowed his disciples to eat their meals without washing their hands (verse 2).

Q. Why was this so offensive to them ?

A. Because the "tradition of the elders," that is, a set of rules laid down by some men learned in the law like themselves, had forbidden it.

Q. What does Jesus reply to them ?

A. That they also, even in these very traditions, disobeyed the commandments.

Q. What example does he give ?

A. He tells them that while one of the commandments requires them to honor their father and mother, they yet excuse themselves from doing so, by pretending that they set apart as a "gift" for some religious use what they ought to allow for their parents' support.

Q. What would they be doing in such a case ?

A. Breaking the commandment of God, in order to keep the tradition of men.

Q. What is our first duty in such a case ?

A. Never to allow any thing to prevent our obeying the commands of God.

Q. What does Jesus say, in plain language, is the great sin of these scribes and Pharisees ?

A. (See verses 8 and 9.)

Q. From what place in the Scriptures does he quote this passage ?

A. From Isaiah (which was the same name with *Esaias*), xxix. 13.

Q. What does he intend by saying, "Esaias did prophesy of you" ?

A. That as Esaias *prophesied*, or *preached*, this of the hypocrites of his time, so it remained true of the hypocrites of the Saviour's time.

Q. What was the meaning of the rebuke?

A. That they *pretended* to love God, and worship him, without really loving him or doing his will.

Q. If we take such a disgraceful and wicked course, what shall we be?

A. Hypocrites.

Q. Is it not perfectly vain and useless to try to make ourselves *appear* to God differently from what we really are?

A. It is; because it not only degrades our own souls, but he looks into the heart and knows our thoughts and motives; nothing can be concealed from him.

Q. Jesus goes on to speak of the particular charge brought against his disciples, which was, that they ate their meals with unwashed hands; what was this *washing of the hands*?

A. It was something insisted on by the scribes and Pharisees, not so much for the sake of being cleanly and neat, as because it was a ceremony enjoined by their tradition.

Q. What does Jesus say of it?

A. That a man's purity and goodness could not depend on such a ceremony (verse 11).

Q. Will you explain the first part of this verse?

A. It means that a person's character does not depend on what he puts into his mouth and eats; so that

if there should be some particles of dust on his food, they would not defile his soul.

Q. What does the latter part of the verse signify ?

A. That what comes "out of the mouth" — that is, the feeling we express — does really affect our character ; it makes those who hear us, and it makes us who speak, either better or worse.

Q. Where do you learn what these things are which, coming out of the heart and the mouth, defile or debase us ?

A. In verses 18-20.

Q. On the other hand, where do you learn what the things were on which the scribes and Pharisees laid the chief stress ?

A. In the first few verses of Mark vii., where the same account is given.

Q. What might you say of yourself, if you regarded any mere ceremony as a matter of more importance than the goodness of your heart, or your daily duties ?

A. That I should then be like one of those whom Jesus reproved.

Q. If you would resemble Jesus, how must you regard sin ?

A. As far worse than any thing else ; I must shun, despise, and hate nothing so much as sin, of every sort.

Q. How must you regard goodness ?

A. I must love it, and hold it far more precious than any outward thing.

Q. What should your chief effort be ?

A. To fill my heart and my life with that heavenly goodness.

Q. How should you infer, from this parable, that you ought to feel respecting what you take as food ?

A. That I ought to be much less anxious or careful about that, than about speaking and doing right.

Q. What are some of the things which, if they were to be allowed to come from your mouth, would defile you ?

A. Any words that would be angry, impure, profane, untrue, or insincere.

Q. What should your words always be if you would imitate your Saviour, and please your Heavenly Father ?

A. They should be gentle, pure, humble, reverential, and sincere, expressing the real feeling, and a good feeling, in my heart.



LESSON XXVII.

PARABLE OF THE TEMPTING HAND, FOOT, AND EYE.

Q. Where was Jesus when he delivered this parable ?

A. He was probably still in Galilee, though he had been in several places since he uttered the passage examined in the last lesson.

Q. Where do you find this parable ?

A. In Matt. xviii. 7-9; as also in Mark ix. 43, &c.

Q. Where do you find essentially the same passage with this, uttered by Jesus on another occasion, as a part of the Sermon on the Mount?

A. In Matt. v. 29, 30.

Q. What do you understand by the word "offence," as it is used in this passage?

A. It signifies a *temptation*, something that tempts, or excites us to do wrong in any way. (See also Luke xvii. 1, 2.)

Q. What, then, is the meaning of the first clause in verse 7?

A. Jesus says, "Alas for the misery that temptations bring into the world, by causing people to sin!"

Q. What is the meaning of the second expression?

A. "It must be, that, since all mankind are capable of doing both right and wrong, some will yield to the bad desire, and take the sinful course."

Q. But what is added immediately?

A. "Woe to that person by whom the temptation cometh! woe to him who causes another to commit sin!"

Q. When we are told, if our hand or our foot offends us, to cut them off and cast them from us, what are we to understand?

A. That if we must either cut off a member of the body so valuable to us as a hand or a foot, on the one hand, or commit some known sin by retaining

them, on the other, it would be better for us to take the former course, and cut them off.

Q. How would you state this in other words?

A. That we ought to be more willing to endure the pain of losing one of our limbs, than to wound and corrupt our souls by breaking God's commandments.

Q. What is meant by "entering into life," in verse 8?

A. It is that *life* described in the lesson preceding the last, — the life of goodness and purity, begun on earth in every good person's heart, and continued for ever in heaven.

Q. What other passages show us that eternal life consists in our being true Christians?

A. Luke xvii. 21, John v. 24, John xvii. 3, and John vi. 63.

Q. Would not the glory and happiness of such a life be cheaply purchased by almost any degree of bodily suffering?

A. It would, for it is the highest of all human attainments, and lasts for ever.

Q. What are we continually taught in the Scriptures, respecting wealth, comfort, learning, fame, and all other earthly possessions?

A. That they are all to be valued far less than simple goodness, before God and men.

Q. But are we often called, in these days, to undergo such trials as are mentioned in these verses?

A. We are not; we are called upon to make sacrifices of another sort.

Q. What sacrifices are we obliged to make in order to be Christians?

A. To deny our evil inclinations; to restrain our tongues from deceit, and our feelings from anger, jealousy, envy, revenge, and lust; to check our appetites; and sometimes to encounter ridicule or opposition in doing our duty.

Q. Hard as it may be to meet such trials, how should we meet them?

A. With courage and patience, keeping the noble resolution to suffer any thing rather than part with our virtue.

Q. Suppose you found that you must either relinquish your intimacy with some companion of bad principles, or do a wrong to yourself, and perhaps others, by continuing the acquaintance, which course would your conscience direct you to take?

A. To give up the acquaintance at once.

Q. Suppose that you have depended very much on some amusement or pleasure, but find that in order to gain it you must neglect some clear duty, what would the noble and Christian action be?

A. To resign the pleasure, and do the duty, — not as if it were a gloomy or hard thing either, but cheerfully.

Q. What will be your reward in such a case?

A. The disappointment will be soon forgotten, but

the joy and satisfaction of having done a brave and virtuous act will remain, and be worth infinitely more than the other pleasure could have been.

Q. In what other passages do we find it declared to be our duty to give up whatever interferes with our virtue ?

A. In Matt. x. 37, 38 ; Rom. viii. 13 ; Mark viii. 34.

Q. What is the comparison drawn by Jesus ?

A. He says that it were better for us to enter upon a holy and heavenly life with a mutilated body, than, having our body sound and comfortable, to let the soul perish.

Q. What is the allusion in the phrases " everlasting fire," and " hell fire " ?

A. The punishment and misery of the wicked are often compared to the fire in the valley of Hinnom, near Jerusalem, which was kept continually burning in order to consume the putrid flesh and other filthy substances that were thrown there.

Q. As self-denial brings us peace, and takes us into the kingdom of spiritual life, what will self-indulgence bring us to ?

A. Sooner or later to certain misery, shame, sorrow, spiritual death, and anguish like that caused by fire burning the body.

Q. If we are careless about duty, and seek only our own pleasure, what must come upon us ?

A. The time must come when we shall see how utterly worthless that pleasure is compared with the deep joy of holding fast to virtue.

Q. What, then, should our resolution be ?

A. That we will take our portion with our Saviour ; shun every thing that would lead us into sin ; give up every thing that would keep us back from duty.

Q. With that resolution, what may we safely do ?

A. Leave all the result with our kind Father in heaven, and trust entirely in him.



LESSON XXVIII.

PARABLE OF THE MAN AND HIS SERVANT.

Q. What are the Apostles said to have asked their Master to do for them, in Luke's Gospel, xvii. 5 ?

A. To increase their faith, so that they might be able to fulfil all the difficult duties which they would be called to perform as his followers.

Q. Who were the Apostles ?

A. They were those whom Jesus chose and sent forth to proclaim his doctrines. (See Matt. x. 1-4.)

Q. When they asked for more faith, what did they desire ?

A. That they might have more trust in God's goodness, and a stronger attachment to Christ and his gospel.

Q. What was the particular occasion of their making this petition ?

A. They saw how much self-denial and courage it would require to imitate Jesus, and practise his lofty virtues.

Q. Were they not also afraid that the opposition and persecution of their enemies might tempt them to give up the preaching of Christ's doctrines, and to forsake him ?

A. Perhaps they were, for they knew that they must encounter many terrible sufferings, if they would persevere in holding and spreading the truths given them by their Master.

Q. What were some of the sufferings they actually endured afterwards, which put their faith to the trial ?

A. They were driven from one place to another, shut up in prison, called by the most disgraceful names, accused of hating those whom they loved, and many of them were put to death in the most cruel and dreadful manner.

Q. Though our trials are different from theirs, is there not need for us also every day to lift a similar prayer to our Father in heaven ?

A. There is ; for every day we are tempted to sin in some way, and in every sin we forsake Christ and his instructions.

Q. Why did the Apostles ask *Christ* to increase their faith ?

A. Because they felt that whatever faith they had, they had received through him ; and while he was among them on earth, they naturally asked him for more.

Q. Where do we find his plain direction given us, that, after his departure from the world, we should pray only to the Father in his name ?

A. In John xvi. 23.

Q. What reply did the Saviour make to their request ?

A. (See verse 6.)

Q. This is evidently a figurative expression, not to be understood literally ; what, then, is meant by it ?

A. That if his followers have the right kind of faith, they shall be able to do things extremely difficult in resisting temptation and improving their souls, — things as difficult in a *moral* point of view, as pulling up a sycamine-tree is to the bodily strength.

Q. What kind of faith is that which is as a “grain of mustard-seed” ?

A. A faith always growing, always increasing. (See the Lesson on the Parable of the Mustard-Seed.)

Q. In what other place does Jesus use a similar figure of speech, to show how strong a true Christian faith may become ?

A. In Matt. xxi. 21.

Q. Here begins the parable of the man and his servant ; what is the design of this parable ?

A. To show that when we have done our utmost in virtue, and have the strongest faith possible, we have done no more than we ought.

Q. When a man has a servant, does he expect to wait on the servant and to prepare his meals, or to have his servant wait on him?

A. Of course, to have the servant wait on him.

Q. Why?

A. Because he employs the servant, with a fair and honest understanding that this is to be his business.

Q. And if the servant does this, does he perform his duty to his employer?

A. He performs it exactly, and no more than his duty.

Q. What, then, is the reason that the employer does not think it necessary to thank the servant for such a service? (Verse 9.)

A. Because the terms of their agreement are only fulfilled, and the servant has not done a *favor*.

Q. What is the meaning of "I *trou* not"?

A. "I *think* not."

Q. What is the application Jesus makes of this parable to his followers?

A. (Verse 10.) He says, that so, when we have thoroughly kept all God's commandments, we have done no *favor* to the Almighty, over and above our duty, but just our duty, and no more.

Q. What is the meaning of the phrase, "unprofitable servants"?

A. Servants that have conferred no special obligations, though they may have been very useful in their work.

Q. How does it appear that our obedience to God is no more than a servant's barely fulfilling his agreement with his master ?

A. Because God has made us all that we are, and given us every thing we have, and therefore we owe to him all that we can do.

Q. When we are holy, do we not perform really as great a service to ourselves as to any one else ?

A. We do ; because we make ourselves happier and stronger.

Q. When we are virtuous and devout, are we any thing more than our nature requires us to be ?

A. We are not, for our Maker designed us, and fitted our very being, to be virtuous and devout.

Q. When we have accomplished our utmost in being good, is our goodness at all equal to God's kindness and love to us ?

A. It never can be ; for life, friends, health, joy, and religion are all his gifts.

Q. And yet, how can we best show our gratitude to God for the blessings we receive from him ?

A. By doing his will, and offering him our prayers.

Q. But when we see that he is perfect, and infinitely greater and holier than we can be, how must we feel ?

A. Very humble.

- Q.** If, then, our best actions, and the purest lives we can lead, are no more than what is due to our Maker, what should our continued effort be?
- A.** To render him this our humble service, at least, cheerfully and constantly.
- Q.** How does this lesson make all wickedness appear?
- A.** As doubly disgraceful in us, and doubly ungrateful; for if goodness is no more than we owe to God, how much injustice and baseness are we guilty of when we do not render him even that return!
- Q.** When our Father in heaven rewards us for doing well, is it because we earn that reward by any merit of our own?
- A.** Not at all, but because he loves us, and pours out blessings upon us, of his own free bounty.

LESSON XXIX.

PARABLE OF THE UNFORGIVING SERVANT.

- Q.** For what purpose did the Saviour give the parable of the unforgiving servant?
- A.** To teach his followers that they should forgive all those who injure them.
- Q.** What is the great reason set forth here for our forgiving injuries?

A. The fact that we must depend on the forgiveness of our Father in heaven, in order to be happy.

Q. Why is this ?

A. We have all sinned, and nothing but the forgiveness of God can relieve us from the miserable punishment of our sins.

Q. If we would hope, then, to be forgiven, what must we first do ?

A. We must forgive others.

Q. Is not this plainly implied in one of the petitions of the Lord's prayer ?

A. It is : — "Forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive them that trespass against us."

Q. In what passages of the Sermon on the Mount is the same thing declared ?

A. In Matt. vi. 14, 15, and Matt. v. 7.

Q. In what other part of Christ's instructions do you find a passage resembling this parable ?

A. In Luke vii. 41 - 43.

Q. Where is the parable itself recorded ?

A. In Matt. xviii. 23, and the remaining verses of the chapter.

Q. When was it uttered ?

A. Immediately after the parable of the last lesson, and while Jesus was still remaining in Galilee.

Q. What drew this parable from him at this time ?

A. The question asked by Peter, one of the Apostles (verse 21).

Q. What is the meaning of Christ's answer to that question, in verse 22 ?

A. That we should forgive our fellow-creatures, not exactly four hundred and ninety times, but *any number of times*, — an indefinite number, — as often as they offend against us.

Q. How does Jesus explain and enforce his meaning?

A. By supposing a case, and telling the story of a servant who was forgiven, but who would not forgive.

Q. When the king, in the story, reckons with his servants, how much is one of them found to owe him?

A. "Ten thousand talents," — an immense sum of money, amounting to several millions of dollars.

Q. How would a servant be likely to owe the king so vast a debt?

A. He was not probably a *household* servant, but a prince or ruler of a station inferior to that of the king, and yet having large dealings with him.

Q. When this servant was found quite unable to pay his debt, what did the king command to be done, in order that his demand might be satisfied?

A. (Verse 25.)

Q. Was it customary among the Jews to sell persons into servitude to pay their debts?

A. It was; see Lev. xxv. 39–41, 47; 2 Kings iv. 1.

Q. What is meant when it is said that the servant fell down and *worshipped* the king?

A. That he prostrated himself, with great humility and deference, and not that he offered that *worship* which is due to God alone.

Q. Is not the word *worship* used often in this sense, in the New Testament, as signifying *reverence*, and not *adoration* ?

A. It is, as in Matt. viii. 2 ; xiv. 33 ; xv. 25 ; Mark v. 6 ; John ix. 38.

Q. When the servant made his earnest appeal to the king, that he might be exempted from this fate, and suffered to be at liberty till he could repay the money, what did the king do ?

A. (Verse 27.)

Q. What base and mean thing was this servant immediately guilty of ?

A. (Verses 28 – 30.)

Q. What makes his conduct appear doubly disgraceful ?

A. The circumstance that he had just been treated with pity and mercy.

Q. How is this brought out with peculiar force ?

A. The words used by his fellow-servant *without avail* are the very *same words* used by himself, which obtained the forbearance of the king.

Q. What other circumstance still further aggravates the wickedness of this act ?

A. While the servant had just been released from a debt of millions of dollars, he would not release his fellow-servant who was under a debt of only about fourteen dollars.

Q. What was the value of a “penny” among the Jews ?

A. A penny, or denarius, was worth about fourteen of our cents.

Q. After the servant had cruelly and ungratefully cast his fellow-debtor into prison, what happened ?

A. (Verse 31.)

Q. What did the king say to the servant ?

A. (Verses 32, 33.)

Q. Does it appear that the servant had any thing to answer to this rebuke ?

A. He had nothing.

Q. What then did the king do, to punish such outrageous ingratitude and cruelty ?

A. (Verse 34.) He delivered him to the "tormenters," — that is, to the jail-keepers, — who sometimes increased the punishment of prisoners by torturing them with whips, or chains, or partial starvation.

Q. Where do we find the application of this parable ?

A. (In verse 35.)

Q. Who is represented to us by the "king" ?

A. God, the creator and ruler of the universe, to whom we are all accountable.

Q. Who is represented by the "servant" ?

A. Any human being, — any one of us.

Q. If you were that servant, who would your "fellow-servants" be ?

A. All human beings, — members of the great human family.

Q. What is the "debt" spoken of, which we owe to God ?

- A.** That debt that is created by our sins against him, or against his commands ; for our obedience belongs to him.
- Q.** Have we not full assurance that our Father loves us so tenderly, that he is willing to forgive us whenever we repent of our sins ?
- A.** We have, both in his word, and in the fact that he gave his dear Son to suffer and die to lead us away from our sins, and bring us to repentance and salvation.
- Q.** If, then, every sin we commit puts us in debt towards God, since we sin every day, how great must this debt be ?
- A.** Larger than we can conceive, and infinitely larger than the amount of any one's offences towards us.
- Q.** And if our Father is willing to forgive such an enormous amount of evil in us the moment we repent and forsake it, how should we feel towards the evil that we see in our fellow-mortals ?
- A.** We should be not only ready, but eager, to pardon it, and try to forget it.
- Q.** When some of your companions have been unjust, or overbearing, or peevish, or ill-natured, — when they have ridiculed you, or provoked you, or slandered you, — what should you seek first of all things to do ?
- A.** To forgive them entirely, from my very heart.
- Q.** When a person says that he can *forgive* an in-

jury, but that he cannot *forget* it, what may you generally infer ?

A. That he does not *really*, *thoroughly* forgive it.

Q. What three high motives especially urge you to forgive all who vex or injure you in any way ?

A. I should do so because my conscience will be peaceful and happy after it, because Jesus Christ, who is my example, did so (see Luke xxiii. 33, 34), and because I may then hope that my many sins will be forgiven by my Father in heaven.



LESSON XXX.

PARABLE OF THE UNJUST JUDGE.

Q. Where is the parable of the unjust judge recorded ?

A. In the first eight verses of the eighteenth chapter of Luke's Gospel.

Q. Where was Jesus when he delivered this parable ?

A. He was travelling on his way to Jerusalem. (See Luke xvii. 11.)

Q. In the first verse it is said Jesus spake this parable "unto *them*"; who were these persons ?

A. His disciples. (See Luke xvii. 22.)

Q. Is it probable this parable was a continuation of the discourse of Jesus recorded in the latter part of the preceding chapter ?

A. It is; for we must remember that the division of

the Gospels into chapters was made for the convenience of the reader, and not to show that there was any interruption in what was said or done by Christ and his followers.

Q. What is the meaning of the phrase, "to this end"?

A. It means that Christ spoke the parable *for the purpose of teaching this particular lesson.*

Q. And what is this lesson?

A. He shows us that we ought to be in the habit of praying constantly; and that we should never be weary or discouraged in our prayers; that we should not for any cause omit to pray; because, if we persevere, our prayers will be answered.

Q. Does Jesus mean, in the second verse, to state it as a fact that there was really just such a judge as this?

A. He does not. He imagines such a person. It is as if he should say, "Let us suppose there was in a city," &c.

Q. What was the office of such a "judge" as is here spoken of, in the time of our Saviour, and in his country?

A. There were actually three judges in every Jewish city; and it was their business to decide questions about property, to settle difficulties and quarrels between the citizens, and to see that certain guilty persons were punished for their crimes. (The teacher may see Calmet's Dictionary, Art. *Judges*.)

Q. Had the judge who is here imagined by Jesus the

character that such an important officer ought to have ?

A. He had not ; for while a judge ought by all means to fear and serve God, who is the Great Judge of all men, and ought to imitate his justice, and have a tender regard for the rights of his fellow-men, this one “ feared not God, neither regarded man.”

Q. What was the case presented to this wicked judge to decide ?

A. A poor widow had been injured by an adversary, and she sought that what was her due might be restored to her.

Q. Was the judge willing to attend to her request, and grant her what justice required ?

A. He was not at first ; nor would he have been at all, for any regard to what was right and good, or any pity for her lonely condition.

Q. What finally induced him to give his attention to her case ?

A. It was simply the fear that by her “ continual coming ” to seek his aid, she might occupy his time, or intrude upon his comfort, and so annoy him.

Q. What proof have we that she came to him more than once ?

A. The word *came*, in the third verse, really signifies — in the Greek (the language in which this account was first written) — “ she *kept coming*.”

Q. When the widow is represented as saying, “ *Avenge*

me," is it meant that she wished to have *revenge*, in a bad sense, and return evil for evil ?

A. Not at all. With that meaning the parable would be very hard to understand. If that had been her request, she *ought* to have been denied.

Q. What then did she ask for ?

A. She asked — as we find by ascertaining the signification of the word that is translated *avenge* — only that she might have justice done her by a person who had wronged her.

Q. Did the judge do any thing that was honorable or kind, or any thing that could be acceptable in the sight of God, when he granted her request ?

A. He did not ; for although he did what was right in itself, yet as he did it for the sake of his own ease, he acted from a selfish and base motive.

Q. What would have been a noble and pure motive ?

A. The love of doing right, or a regard to the poor widow.

Q. What is the meaning of the Saviour's explanation of this parable in verses 7 and 8 ?

A. That if even this unjust judge was persuaded to listen to the widow, against his evil inclinations, merely on account of her importuning him, how much more reason have we to believe that God, who is perfectly just and perfectly kind, will hear and answer the prayers of the children whom he loves !

Q. Who are intended by the "elect," in the 7th verse ?

A. Those early Christians who, because they believed on Christ and followed him, were called God's "elect," — that is, his "chosen ones." (See Matt. xxiv. 31, and Mark xiii. 20, 22, 27.)

Q. Is it probable that this parable had any express reference to circumstances that took place near the time of our Saviour?

A. It is; Christ undoubtedly alluded to the event he had been speaking of in the preceding chapter, the approaching destruction of the city of Jerusalem, an occurrence often designated as "the coming of the Son of Man."

Q. How would the parable apply to that event?

A. Christ teaches his disciples by it to wait patiently for the destruction of Jerusalem, — a time they longed for, because it would deliver them from their persecutors, the unbelieving Jews, by overturning their power, and thus permit the spreading and triumph of their Christian faith.

Q. How do you understand the latter part of the 8th verse?

A. Jesus there expresses his fears lest, when that great revolution shall actually come, and a fair opportunity be given for the preaching of his gospel, few will be found on earth ready to receive it, and to have faith in him and in his words.

Q. But has not the parable a more general application?

A. It contains important truth, that is applicable to every Christian, and to each one of us.

Q. Will you name one inference we are to draw from it ?

A. That we should all be as anxious for spiritual blessings from God, and as constant and urgent in our prayers for his help in renewing our hearts and improving our characters, as we are to have justice done us in human affairs and business transactions.

Q. Will you mention another great truth that we are taught by this parable ?

A. We are taught that God will surely hear those who earnestly call upon him, — who are willing to “ cry day and night unto him.”

Q. Will you repeat the first part of what was said to be the chief lesson Jesus teaches here ?

A. He shows us that we ought to be in the habit of praying constantly ; “ that we ought always to pray and not to faint.”

Q. Can you name and repeat some other passages in the New Testament, where this duty of “ praying always ” is enjoined ?

A. (The pupil will here repeat Luke xxi. 36 ; Romans xii. 12 ; Colossians iv. 2 ; and Thessalonians v. 17.)

Q. What do you understand, in these texts, by “ praying always,” and “ praying without ceasing ” ?

A. That we ought all to pray to God very frequently, every day we live, and thus maintain that devout disposition, that trustful state of the mind, which

never ceases, and which nothing but prayer can produce in us.

Q. Will you mention some reasons why you should so pray ?

A. Because we depend on God for every thing we have, — for all our possessions, our friends, our pleasures, our knowledge, our virtues, and our hopes of heaven. Because we thus please God, and keep his commandments. Because we thus prove to him that we are sincere in loving him and trusting him. Because our communion with him must purify our souls ; elevate our thoughts ; cleanse our hearts from bad passions and evil desires ; make us love goodness ; enable us to keep all our best resolutions, and be useful to our fellow-men, and give us inward strength and peace.

Q. What is the other part of the chief lesson of this parable ?

A. That we should never be weary or discouraged in our prayers.

Q. In what other texts of the New Testament are we shown that we should *wait patiently* for our Heavenly Father to hear us and bless us ?

A. (The pupil may repeat as before, James v. 7 and 8 ; Hebrews x. 36 ; 2 Thessalonians iii. 5 ; Luke xxi. 19.)

Q. How does it happen that we often become discouraged in our prayers ?

A. We are impatient, and in haste for some visible

answer, instead of submitting entirely to the wisdom of our Maker.

Q. Can we expect to know the best *method* in which our petitions shall be fulfilled ?

A. We cannot. We ought to believe that God will answer us *in some way*, though the answer may be invisible, spiritual, in the secret benefits of the soul.

Q. What should be our feeling when we supplicate earthly blessings ?

A. We should feel, that to receive precisely what we ask for *might* be the most serious evil, and therefore we should be willing to leave all results with Him who careth for us as a parent, adding to our other requests, "Father, thy will, not mine, be done !"

Q. What is a great encouragement to us to continue our endeavours to pray, in a reverential and humble spirit, even when we begin to be disheartened ?

A. The cheering fact, that the more we engage in devotion, the more delightful does it become, while our holy and compassionate Father never fails to listen to the sincere cry of his children.

LESSON XXXI.

PARABLE OF THE PUBLICAN AND THE PHARISEE.

Q. Where do you find the parable of the publican and the Pharisee ?

A. In Luke xviii. 9 - 14.

Q. For whose benefit and instruction was it especially designed ?

A. (See verse 9.)

Q. Who were these haughty persons that thought themselves righteous and despised others ?

A. The Pharisees and scribes. (See the Lesson on the Parable of the Food eaten with Unwashed Hands ; and also the 23d chapter of Matthew.)

Q. What was the object of the Pharisees in their prayers ?

A. To make themselves *appear* pious to other men, but not to commune with God, or be made holier.

Q. What did they think the excellence of a prayer consisted in ?

A. In its length, and in the sanctimonious air with which it is offered.

Q. What were they soon guilty of, accordingly ?

A. Insincerity, and often the basest hypocrisy.

Q. What does the excellence of prayer *really* consist in ?

A. In the feeling of humility, penitence, and devo-

tion which is in the heart when the prayer is made.

Q. Can there be any true prayer without such feeling?

A. There cannot; for prayer is communion with God, and we can never draw nigh to him while we are proud, selfish, bigoted, or impure.

Q. How does Jesus illustrate this contrast between a true prayer and a false one?

A. By giving an example of both, in this parable.

Q. What was the office of a "publican," or tax-gatherer?

A. (See the Lesson on the Parable of the Lost Sheep, and of the Lost Piece of Silver.)

Q. What was the Pharisee's prayer in fact, as it is given in verse 11?

A. It was a vain boast of his own goodness.

Q. Are we to understand of course that this person was as good as he represented himself to be?

A. Not by any means; for in those points in which men think themselves to be strong, they are very apt to be weak.

Q. Suppose that he had been as good as he thought himself, would his goodness, even according to his own account, have been of the highest kind?

A. It would not; for, on the one hand, he would only be free from certain flagrant vices, and on the other, he would be scrupulous about certain outward ceremonies.

Q. Might he be all this and yet be quite destitute of benevolence and kindness, or an earnest love for God ?

A. He might be.

Q. Is it sufficient for us, in the sight of God, that we can say we are no worse than others ?

A. It is not, but we should have a higher standard. Jesus is our example, and we should compare ourselves with him.

Q. Is it enough that we are able to say we do no *harm* to others ?

A. It is not ; for we ought to do a great deal of good to others.

Q. Did the Pharisees think it a great merit to fast twice in the week ?

A. They did, — on Mondays and Thursdays.

Q. What was it to give tithes of all that he possessed ?

A. To pay a certain proportion of his property, as a sort of tax, for religious purposes.

Q. When do we make a right use of ceremonies and particular days like a fast ?

A. When we so employ them as to make ourselves really better, in our duties to God and to men.

Q. When do we make a wrong and false use of them ?

A. When we make them stand *instead* of holy *actions*, and employ them so as to injure our moral characters.

Q. Can such things as these ever be *substitutes* for virtue, or release us in the sight of God from performing all our daily duties ?

A. Never. (See Matt. xxiii. 23.)

Q. As the Pharisee gives us an example of pride and disgusting self-admiration, what does the publican give us an example of in his prayer ?

A. Of humility and beautiful penitence and devotion.

Q. What is implied (verse 13) by his "standing afar off" ?

A. That he did not wish to thrust himself into notice, as the Pharisees did (see Matt. vi. 5), but to retire out of sight.

Q. How does the same humility appear in the next clause ?

A. He "would not lift up so much as his eyes unto heaven," but fixed them on the ground in token of his lowliness before God.

Q. How does the same humble sense of unworthiness appear yet farther ?

A. In the next expression, — he "smote upon his breast," — a movement indicating self-reproach and sorrow.

Q. But how is this humility manifested yet more clearly ?

A. In the prayer he breathed to God, where he confesses that he is a sinner, and entreats for a merciful forgiveness : — "God be merciful to me a sinner !"

Q. What may we learn from this?

A. That our prayers should be offered in a similar spirit.

Q. What reason do we find for this in the next verse?

A. Jesus assures us, on his own high authority, that whoever prays thus will be justified in the sight of God, rather than the one who *pretends* to pray, with pharisaic pride in his heart.

Q. What is the meaning of the word "justified" here?

A. "Looked upon as having a good heart, and therefore forgiven."

Q. In the brief *moral* that is appended to this parable in verse 14, what is said of every person who "exalteth himself," that is, praises himself, and thinks too highly of himself?

A. That he "shall be abased," that is, a low place will be given him in the opinion of mankind, who will soon find out his real worth, and in the unerring judgment of God.

Q. On the other hand, how will it be with those who *humble themselves*, or feel their deficiencies, and cherish a lowly temper?

A. They "shall be exalted," in the high opinion of men, and in the favor of God and the happiness of heaven.

Q. When we pray to our Maker, what should we remember?

A. That he sees the secrets of our hearts, and that we cannot possibly deceive him.

Q. What, then, may we always do without fear?

A. Confess all our faults, and beseech him to pardon them.



LESSON XXXII.

PARABLE OF THE LABORERS IN THE VINEYARD.

Q. How will you learn the object and meaning of the parable of the laborers in the vineyard, as it is recorded in Matt. xx. 1 - 16.

A. By reading what Jesus had just been saying, in the latter part of chap. xix., and especially in the last verse.

Q. What is the meaning of that verse?

A. That many who should become believers of the gospel at a time distant from that when Christ was speaking would enter more fully into its spirit, and therefore share more largely in its rewards, than those who outwardly professed it at an early date.

Q. What shows particularly that Jesus designed to illustrate this truth by this parable?

A. The word "for," at the beginning of verse 1 of chap. xx., connecting this passage with what goes before.

Q. How may we vary the reading of the first verse?

A. So as to make it, — “God, in his method of receiving mankind into the kingdom of heaven, that is, into the faith and peace of the Christian religion, is like,” &c.

Q. Jesus then goes on to compare to the Creator a certain householder; who are represented by the laborers that he hired to work in his vineyard?

A. Those persons who are invited to come and labor, as disciples of Jesus Christ, in works of Christian faith.

Q. Why is a “vineyard” mentioned here?

A. Cultivating grapes was a common occupation among the Jews; and a garden or field stocked with the vines was called a “vineyard.”

Q. What is the sum mentioned in verse 2 as a day’s wages?

A. A penny, or about fourteen cents, the usual price at that time and in that country.

Q. When was the “third hour”?

A. Among the Jews and Romans, the day began at six o’clock, A. M., and the hour from six and seven was called the *first* hour; the third hour would be that completed at nine o’clock, A. M.

Q. The householder hired other laborers at the sixth, and others still at the ninth hour (verse 5); what would those hours be in our reckoning?

A. As we just saw, the sixth would reach to twelve o’clock at noon, and the ninth to three o’clock, P. M.

Q. When was the last set of laborers hired ?

A. (Verse 6.) At about the eleventh hour, or between four and five o'clock in the afternoon.

Q. At the close of the day's work the owner bade his steward pay the laborers ; what was the office of this "steward" ?

A. To oversee the affairs of the household ; see the Lesson on the Parable of the Unjust Steward.

Q. Why did the householder order a full day's wages to be given to those who only began to work at four or five o'clock ?

A. Perhaps because he saw that they worked more strenuously and faithfully than the others, who commenced in the morning ; perhaps because he pitied their condition in that they were *not able* to obtain work and wages through the day.

Q. What complaint was made by those who had labored all the day ?

A. That their fellows should receive equal pay, with less work.

Q. But did they not receive that for which they fairly "agreed," as appears from verse 2 ?

A. They did ; and therefore they had no right to complain.

Q. Was it not a small jealousy in them to be irritated because the householder chose to be liberal to their companions, as long as he was perfectly just to them ?

A. It was ; and so the householder regarded it, as

appears from his unanswerable words in verses 13 - 15.

Q. What is the signification of the expression (verse 15), "Is thine eye evil because I am good?"

A. "Should you feel the bad passion of envy or selfishness because I choose to be generous?"

Q. At the conclusion of the parable, Jesus repeats the declaration that he made at the beginning; will you state the meaning of this verse 16?

A. Those who shall learn the truth of the Christian doctrine shall not suffer because they had not the means of learning it sooner; that is rather their misfortune than their fault.

Q. Had not Jesus here a distinct reference to the Jews and the Gentiles?

A. Probably he had, and meant to say, that many Gentiles (or persons of foreign nations), who might be converted to Christianity years after the Jews had heard of it, would yet hold a higher place in the scale of Christian excellence and joy, on account of their better dispositions and lives.

Q. What lesson may you learn from this parable?

A. I may learn to thank my Heavenly Father that he has shown this liberal and kind favor towards all his children alike; and that he blesses those who are true disciples of his Son, as much in one age of the world as in another.

Q. What other lesson may you learn?

A. To despise and shun every feeling of envy or

malice towards those who seem to be more highly favored in any respect than myself.

Q. What other lesson still, — the most important of all ?

A. To embrace with all my heart the faith sent me by so kind a Father, and to imitate carefully and cheerfully the virtues of my generous, pure, and holy Saviour.



LESSON XXXIII.

PARABLE OF THE MASTER OF THE HOUSE.

Q. Where do you find Christ's parable of the master of the house recorded ?

A. In the 13th chapter of Luke's Gospel, from verses 22 – 30.

Q. At what period in the life of Christ was this parable spoken by him ?

A. But a few weeks before the last Feast of the Passover that he ever went up to Jerusalem to attend ; and only a short time before his crucifixion.

Q. What was the occasion that called forth this parable from the Saviour ?

A. It was the question that some one who was near him asked of him, — " Are there few that be saved ? " (See verse 23.)

Q. What is the meaning of the phrase " be saved " ?

A. As it is used in many places in the New Testament, the phrase "to be saved" means, to believe on Jesus Christ as the Saviour of the world; to become his disciple, and imitate his example; to have that inward peace and spiritual strength which such a faith imparts; and thus to "be saved" from the evils and temptations of this world, and "saved" also from that misery, weakness, guilt, and bitter remorse which must belong to those who have not such a faith, both in this world and in the world to come.

Q. Is it certain that the person who put the question had all this that you have just said in his thoughts?

A. Perhaps he had not; he may have only intended to inquire whether many or few would visibly join the company of Jesus on the earth, and attend him as his followers.

Q. What other supposition may be made respecting this question?

A. It is possible that it was asked out of an idle curiosity; or in a sneering spirit; and that the person implied a taunt in what he said, because, while Christ declared that he was to convert and save the world, he had yet so few attendants with him.

Q. Did Christ ever say that many would embrace his truth and believe on him while he was on the earth?

A. He did not; he implied that they would be few

at first, and that it would be a long time before mankind generally would receive him as a Saviour.

Q. Do all mankind at this day believe on Jesus Christ, and what he taught ?

A. Not all ; many in heathen countries never heard of him, and are to be pitied for their ignorance, rather than blamed for their unbelief.

Q. But do all those in Christian lands who have heard of him, and who have read the Bible, really believe on him ?

A. Many do not, or at least they do not live as if they believed on him, for they do not try to perform the things which he bade them, but continue in wicked practices ; and these are not “ saved.”

Q. What reply did Jesus make to this question that was put to him ?

A. “ Strive to enter in at the strait gate ; for many, I say unto you, shall seek to enter in, and shall not be able.” (Verse 24.)

Q. Should we infer from this answer that he thought the question as to the precise number of them that should be saved a very important one ?

A. We should not ; for he speaks as if he thought it of much more consequence that each individual should strive to secure his own salvation, than that he should spend his time in the unprofitable inquiry whether many others would be saved.

Q. What is the peculiar signification of the word “ strive ” here ?

A. It signifies "toil very earnestly," "make constant and strenuous exertion," "strain every nerve and muscle," to do good and overcome your evil passions, as the wrestler in the old Grecian games used to struggle to conquer his antagonist.

Q. Explain the expression "enter in at the strait gate."

A. It is a comparison showing that to live a righteous life, and do our duty, — and thus to be saved and enjoy eternal life and happiness, — is a very difficult work ; a work that requires careful exertion, like entering into a difficult passage through a narrow or "strait" gate. (See also Matt. vii. 13, 14.)

Q. Where does the parable properly begin ?

A. At the next, or 25th, verse.

Q. What do you understand to be the sense of that verse ?

A. Christ compares our becoming faithful, righteous, and pure, to entering into a house ; he compares himself to the master of that house ; and the door of that house is the door of salvation. (See Matt. xxv. 10.)

Q. Whom does he point out as those who "seek to enter in," that is, carelessly pretend they wish to enter, but come after the door is shut, and not till then try to enter, saying, "Lord, Lord, open to us" ?

A. Those are persons who, while they know that

they ought to become Christians, neglect and refuse to do so, and prefer to gratify their bad passions, until at last they become alarmed at what is before them, and call on Christ to save them merely because they are afraid, and without really loving him.

Q. Can such persons hope for the true peace and reward of Christian faith?

A. They cannot; this parable teaches us that they cannot.

Q. Why not?

A. Because real faith, — “the faith that bringeth salvation,” — grows out of love for Christ, and a deep desire to obey his truth, and keep his precepts. He loves them that love him.

Q. What are these insincere and wicked persons represented as saying in the 26th verse?

A. That they have known all about Christ, as, for instance, that they have read of him, and attended church where he was preached.

Q. Will this save them?

A. Not unless they believe what they read and hear, and try continually to practise it.

Q. What is the fearful sentence that must be pronounced on such persons at the judgment?

A. The Lord shall say, “I tell you, I know you not whence ye are; depart from me, all ye workers of iniquity.”

Q. Is not this plainly a just sentence?

A. It is; for they have chosen to be sinful, rather than holy, and they must suffer the consequences.

Sin must bring misery; holiness will bring peace.

Q. What does Jesus say of these wicked ones who will not be his disciples, in the 28th verse?

A. That they will feel anguish and dreadful shame, when they see good men, like the patriarchs we read of in the Old Testament, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, enjoying the pleasures of a quiet conscience, a trustful faith, and all the happiness of heaven, while they themselves, who might have been likewise saved, are in the darkness and despair of wickedness and its punishment.

Q. What is declared in the 29th verse?

A. That people from all parts of the world, Gentiles and Jews, shall believe on Christ, and follow him. (See Matt. viii. 11.)

Q. What is meant by their "sitting down in the kingdom of God"?

A. That they shall enjoy all the spiritual advantages and satisfactions which belong to those who live a Christian life in this world, and shall dwell in the presence of God and his holy children in heaven.

Q. Explain verse 30.

A. Jesus admonishes the Jews whom he was speaking to, that, although they had hitherto been "first" of all nations in their privileges and opportunities for knowing and doing the will of God, inasmuch as they were a favored people, yet that they are dis-

posed to be "last" in accepting his truth, and entering his spiritual kingdom ; while the Gentiles, that is, *other* nations, who had been "last," or lowest, in their knowledge hitherto, would be "first" in believing and being saved.

Q. Has this been proved true, up to this day ?

A. It has. The Jews have generally refused to believe in Christ, while most Christians have been of Gentile nations, that is, of nations not Jews.

Q. In what other passages do you find the same sentiment that is expressed in verse 30 ?

A. In Matt. xix. 30, and in Mark x. 31.

Q. Mention now some practical lesson that you can learn from this parable.

A. That it is of more importance for me to strive that my own soul may be saved, than to find out how many will be saved.

Q. Mention another.

A. I learn that to be saved is to believe Jesus Christ, to love him, and to try to be like him. If I do this, I shall always be safe from every real harm, and God will bless me, on earth and in heaven.

Q. Mention another.

A. I learn that to attain salvation from sin is not an easy thing ; it cannot be done by idleness and carelessness ; I must struggle hard, and resist my bad propensities continually.

Q. Are the difficulties in the way of being good the same to all persons ?

A. They are not ; they are different, and peculiar to each one of us.

Q. Were they the same in the time of Christ that they are now ?

A. Partly ; but not altogether. Christians then had various prejudices and customs to contend with that have now disappeared.

Q. How shall we find out the real obstacles that most hinder *us* in being good ?

A. By studying our own hearts, thinking on our own actions, and praying to God to reveal our besetting sins to us.

Q. When we have found them out, what is it our duty to do ?

A. To resist and overcome them.

Q. What are some of the things that are most likely to hinder us in being saved ?

A. Selfishness, vanity, falsehood, disobedience to parents, unlawful appetites, the love of sensual pleasures, and worldly-mindedness.

Q. Does not God invite us and encourage us every one to come to him and be saved ?

A. He does. (Repeat Matt. xviii. 14, and Luke xv. 10, and 2 Pet. iii. 9.)

Q. How, then, may we be saved ?

A. By repenting of our sins, imitating Jesus, having faith in God through his Son, striving to do well, and looking up to our Heavenly Father in prayer.

Q. What should be the effect upon us of that fearful

sentence in the parable that was pronounced on those against whom the door was shut ?

- A.* It should quicken us to believe *now*, to do our duty *now*, to be saved *now*, and not put it off to another time, lest we also perish miserably.



LESSON XXXIV.

PARABLE OF THE TEN POUNDS.

- Q.* After delivering several of the preceding parables, on his way through Perea, or "the country beyond Jordan," where does Jesus go ?
- A.* Having left Perea, and crossed the river Jordan into Judea, he goes on towards Jerusalem.
- Q.* Will you point out on the map his probable course in passing from Galilee, through a corner of Samaria, through a part of Perea, and thence over the Jordan into Judea, and on to Jerusalem ?
- A.* —.
- Q.* Was not Jesus aware, as he went to Jerusalem, that he would be seized and put to death there ?
- A.* He was. (See Matt. xx. 17, &c. ; Mark x. 32, &c. ; Luke xviii. 31, &c.)
- Q.* What enabled him then to go and face scorn and death with such sublime fortitude ?
- A.* The consciousness that by doing so he would prove to the whole world that he was in earnest,

inspire mankind with faith in his heavenly doctrines, and touch their hearts by such an affecting proof of his love, and his Father's love, and thus bring them to repent of their sins.

Q. Where and when did he deliver the parable of the pounds ?

A. After crossing the Jordan, and before he reached Jerusalem.

Q. Where do you find the occasion or object of this parable stated ?

A. In verse 11th of Luke xix.

Q. What was the occasion of it ?

A. Jesus saw that his disciples expected him as the Messiah (according to the old notion of the Jewish people) to make himself a king, and establish an earthly empire, with power and splendor.

Q. What did he teach them respecting this expectation ?

A. That it was altogether false, and that he had no such intention.

Q. What did he always tell them was his great purpose ?

A. To make them *better* in heart and life, — not richer, nor more favored in a political or any outward condition.

Q. What kind of a "kingdom," then, did he wish to establish ?

A. A spiritual kingdom, not seen with the eyes, but felt in the increasing goodness of the soul.

Q. What does Jesus show respecting this *kingdom*, in the parable before us ?

A. That it is offered to all alike ; and that just according as men improve or neglect the light and truth given them in the Christian religion shall they be blessed or be miserable.

Q. What is the story of the parable ?

A. A certain nobleman, expecting to be made the prince or king of the country where he lives, goes to a distant place to receive the office from a higher government.

Q. Was this actually done in Judea ?

A. It was ; the ruler of that country went to Rome to secure his office, for Judea was under the control of the Roman emperor.

Q. What is the nobleman said to do before he starts on this journey ?

A. (Verse 13.)

Q. What was the value of one of these pounds, or *minas* ?

A. Probably about sixteen dollars.

Q. What is the meaning of "*occupy* till I come" ?

A. "*Use this money, — invest it in trade to increase its amount.*"

Q. What took place after this nobleman departed ?

A. (Verse 14.) A remonstrance was sent to the emperor by the people, urging him not to appoint this nobleman as the prince.

Q. Was the remonstrance successful ?

A. It appears not, from verse 15.

Q. On the nobleman's return to his country, as a prince, what did he do?

A. (Verse 15.)

Q. The ten servants having received at the beginning a pound, or *mina*, each, to trade with, what does the first of them say he has gained by trading with his?

A. (Verse 16.)

Q. How does the newly appointed prince reward him, in distributing the offices of his government?

A. (Verse 17.) He gives him the place of a subordinate governor over ten cities.

Q. What happened in relation to the second servant?

A. (Verses 18, 19.)

Q. What appears respecting the third servant in verses 20 and 21?

A. That he had been idle, and thought ill of his master.

Q. How did the prince treat him for his indolence and unfaithfulness?

A. (Verses 22-24.)

Q. Does the prince admit that he was really an austere or hard and exacting man, in verse 22?

A. He does not; he only says to the servant, If you thought me so, your duty was, for that very reason, to be industrious, and prepare for a reckoning with me.

Q. What is verse 25?

A. It is a remark thrown in by some person standing by, — surprised that the one talent this servant had should be taken from him and given to the one who had ten talents already.

Q. How does Jesus reply to this remark, and defend the conduct of the prince in this particular ?

A. He says (verse 26), that those who apply themselves earnestly to their duty shall not only retain what they have, but gain more ; while those who are careless will lose what little they may have. (See also Luke viii. 18 ; Matt. xiii. 12 ; Mark iv. 25.)

Q. Who are the persons alluded to in verse 27 who are so awfully punished ?

A. They are “enemies” mentioned in verse 14.

Q. Whom, now, does Jesus represent by the “nobleman,” or prince, in this parable ?

A. Himself, as the teacher of the gospel, that is, as the head, or prince, of the spiritual kingdom of righteousness and truth.

Q. As the prince in the parable received his earthly authority from a superior power at Rome, from what superior power does Jesus receive his spiritual authority ?

A. From God his Father, who sent him into the world.

Q. Who are the “servants” ?

A. All who are acquainted with the religion of Christ.

Q. What is the pound committed to every one of these servants ?

A. This religion of Christ, — his spiritual teachings.

Q. What, then, are you to learn from the parable?

A. That in proportion as I improve my religious advantages, and perform my duties, I shall be rewarded.

Q. How will you be rewarded?

A. In the favor of my God, in the approbation of my conscience, and in the purity, and strength, and peace of my soul.

Q. Where and when will you be rewarded?

A. Here, on earth, in my present life; and hereafter, in heaven, in my future life.

Q. Suppose you do not improve your opportunities, but are careless, selfish, and disobedient?

A. Then I am taught here that what little peace and comfort I have in my soul must grow less and less, till nothing is left me but remorse, anguish, and sorrow of heart.

Q. Who are those that must expect the awful fate pointed out in verse 27?

A. Those who will not try to lead Christian lives, nor form Christian characters?

Q. What fearful event did Jesus probably allude to, which happened soon after that time?

A. The destruction of Jerusalem, when multitudes of those who would not believe on him, and be his disciples, were killed and burnt by the Roman armies.

Q. How is the lesson of this parable encouraging?

A. It shows us that no goodness we can gain will be lost, or fail of being a source of happiness to us.

Q. How is it solemn?

A. It shows us that our condition here and hereafter depends on our characters.



LESSON XXXV.

PARABLE OF THE TWO SONS.

Q. From what passages may you find what course Jesus took after he delivered the parable of the last lesson?

A. Luke xix. 28; Mark x. 46; John xii. 1-14; and Matt. xxi. 1-18.

Q. What great feast were many Jews going up to Jerusalem at this time to attend?

A. The Feast of the Passover. (John xi. 55.)

Q. What was the Feast of the Passover among the Jews?

A. It was a feast kept by that nation at the time of the year which with us is the beginning of April.

Q. What was the object of it?

A. To commemorate the night when their ancestors escaped from their bondage under Pharaoh, in Egypt, and commenced their journey towards Palestine, which was afterwards their home. (Exod. xii.)

Q. What especial mercy did God show that night to the Jews, or Israelites, which gave its name to this feast ?

A. It is related in Exod. xii., that while God destroyed the eldest child in every family of the Egyptians, for their wickedness, he *passed over*, or spared, the families of the Israelites, whom he did not wish to punish.

Q. After the arrival of Jesus at Jerusalem, how does it appear that he spent the days ?

A. Teaching in the temple. (See Matt. xxi. 10 – 16, and Mark xi. 11 ; also on another day, Matt. xxi. 12, and Luke xix. 45 ; also on another day, Matt. xxi. 23, &c., Mark xi. 27, &c., and Luke xx. 1, &c.)

Q. When was this parable of the two sons delivered ?

A. On the last of the days just mentioned (see Matt. xxi. 23 – 32), as he was teaching in the great temple.

Q. With whom does it appear that Jesus passed the nights at this time ?

A. With his friends, Lazarus, Mary, and Martha, at Bethany. (See Matt. xxi. 17, and Mark xi. 19. See also John xi. and xii.)

Q. What led to this parable of the two sons ?

A. A conversation of Jesus with the chief priests and elders, related in verse 23, &c., of Matt. xxi.

Q. What was the character of these “ chief priests and elders ” ?

A. The same with that described as belonging to the "scribes and Pharisees," in the Lesson on the Parable of the Food eaten with Unwashen Hands.

Q. What was their error?

A. In supposing that fasting, and paying tithes, and disputing with each other about foolish questions relating to matters that had no connection with virtue, were things of more consequence than benevolence, justice, and piety.

Q. In the parable (verse 28), a man is supposed to have two sons of different characters; what does he request one of them to do?

A. To go and labor in his vineyard, or garden of grapes?

Q. What reply did this son make?

A. (Verse 29.)

Q. What, may we suppose, had been the character of this son?

A. Up to this time he had been disobedient and self-willed, as appears from his rude answer to his father.

Q. What probably induced him afterwards to repent of that answer, and go to the work?

A. He reflected on his duties to his kind father, and was ashamed to disobey him, or refuse his request.

Q. What is the father represented as saying to the other son?

A. (Verse 30.)

Q. What was the character of this son?

A. He did not keep his promise ; he *pretended* to be obedient, but ran away from his duty, and committed a falsehood.

Q. Whom did Jesus intend to describe under the character of this second son ?

A. The scribes and Pharisees, the chief priests and elders.

Q. Why ?

A. Because they *professed* to be righteous, but did not *act* righteously.

Q. How are we in danger of being like them ?

A. If we are good only in our own estimation, but do not strive constantly to perform good actions.

Q. How can we escape that danger ?

A. By professing no more than we feel, and, instead of being self-righteous, endeavouring to have pure hearts and virtuous lives.

Q. When we form a good resolution only to break it soon, how is our character apt to be affected ?

A. To be hardened in sin, and led farther astray from duty.

Q. Having committed ourselves to a right course, either openly or in our own minds, what should we apply all our energies to do ?

A. To persevere in it, resolutely and nobly.

Q. Wherein are you to imitate the *first-mentioned* son ?

A. Not in refusing to do my duty at first, but in

really performing it, both towards my earthly parents and towards my Father in heaven.

Q. If you have foolishly refused to do right, what is the first thing to be done ?

A. To repent, to feel humble sorrow, and to go straight to perform that which I have hitherto neglected.

Q. Who, then, are described by Jesus under the character of the first-mentioned son ?

A. Those who are sinful and thoughtless for a time, but who afterwards sincerely turn to a Christian course of life.

Q. What does Jesus uniformly teach shall become of such persons ?

A. They shall be forgiven, and accepted and blessed by our Heavenly Father.

Q. What course can you point out that would have been far better than that pursued by either of these two sons ?

A. To have said, "I will go, Sir," and then to have gone to the labor, cheerfully and industriously performing it, would have been the beautiful and worthy conduct of a truly filial and dutiful child.

Q. How, then, would you draw from that example your right conduct towards God ?

A. I should never hesitate to keep his commandments, but always find satisfaction in doing his will.

LESSON XXXVI.

PARABLE OF THE VINEYARD LET OUT TO HUSBANDMEN.

Q. When was this parable spoken ?

A. Immediately after that contained in the last lesson, and while Jesus was teaching in the temple, a few days before his crucifixion.

Q. Where do you find it ?

A. In Matt. xxi. 33, &c., and also in Mark xii. 1 - 9, and Luke xx. 9 - 19.

Q. What is the householder represented by Jesus as doing ?

A. (Verse 33.)

Q. What was the "wine-press" ?

A. It was a vat, or tub, in which the wine was received after it was trodden out of the grapes that grew in the vineyard.

Q. What was the "tower" built for ?

A. As a post of observation, to guard the vineyard from all kinds of depredation.

Q. The householder, being still absent when the fruit became ripe, does what ?

A. (Verse 34.)

Q. How do the husbandmen to whom he intrusted the care of the vineyard treat the servants whom he now sends for the fruit ?

A. (Verses 35, 36.)

Q. But what right had the householder to these fruits?

A. He had "let out" the vineyard to these husbandmen, and according to customs then prevailing he was to receive a certain portion of the fruits as the *rent*.

Q. What was the object of these wicked and cruel husbandmen, in so treating these servants?

A. To avoid giving up what they owed to the householder, and retain all to themselves.

Q. How did the owner suppose they would regard his own son?

A. (Verse 37.)

Q. What object had the husbandmen in putting him to death?

A. To secure not only the fruits of the season, but the vineyard itself, by destroying him who was to inherit it. (Verses 38, 39.)

Q. Jesus, after relating the parable thus far, asks those who hear him what must be expected to be done to those wicked husbandmen, by the owner, or "lord," of the vineyard,— and what is their reply?

A. (Verse 41.)

Q. How did they commit themselves, unknowingly, by this answer?

A. They might not have perceived that the very meaning of the parable was a bitter reproof of themselves.

Q. How was it so ?

A. Jesus meant these Jews, by the "husbandmen" whom he described.

Q. Who, then, was the "householder," or "lord of the vineyard" ?

A. The Creator.

Q. What were the "fruits" due to him from his people, the Jews ?

A. Righteous actions and holy lives.

Q. Did they yield him those fruits ?

A. They did not, but when messengers came to teach them righteousness and holiness, they persecuted or slew them.

Q. Who were these messengers, or teachers, or "servants," that God sent, from time to time, to recall the Jews to their duty ?

A. Prophets and wise and good men, such as Elijah, Samuel, Isaiah, &c.

Q. Were such persons actually put to death by the Jews ?

A. They were. (See 1 Kings xix. 10 ; 2 Chron. xxxvi. 16 ; Jer. xxxviii. 6 ; Heb. xi. 32, 37 ; and Luke xiii. 34.)

Q. Who was "the son," that was at last sent ?

A. Jesus Christ, the dearly beloved Son of God.

Q. What, then, was the blindest sin of all, in the Jews ?

A. That they put to death that Son of God ; that they crucified the Saviour of the world.

Q. What passage does Jesus apply to himself from the Psalms ?

A. (Pa. cxviii. 22, 23.)

Q. Why does Jesus compare himself to a stone, rejected by the masons as unfit for use, yet afterwards found worthy to be the head-stone at the corner of the building ?

A. Because he was at first to be rejected and slain by the Jews, but afterwards to be the Head of the whole Christian Church, honored and revered as the Saviour of men.

Q. How was the warning of verse 43 fulfilled on the Jews ?

A. A few years after, their nation was destroyed, their chief city was levelled to the ground, and the "kingdom" was "taken from" them.

Q. What is the meaning of Christ's language in verse 44 ?

A. Whoever shall resist Christ and his truth shall come to nothing ; and whoever, by wilful sin, shall expose himself to the judgments of Christ's religion, shall be terribly destroyed by them.

Q. How did the Pharisees feel (verses 45, 46), when they saw that Jesus was rebuking them by his parables ?

A. They wished to take vengeance on him, but dared not, because a multitude believed and followed him ?

Q. How should we all feel respecting our lives in this world ?

A. That we owe the "fruits" of them to our Heavenly Father, and that he has a right to our service.

Q. When we see that he is sending us messengers and teachers of so many kinds, what should our disposition be?

A. To be taught in religious things; to be persuaded by all that we feel, and hear, and see, and suffer, to put our whole faith in God, and do his will faithfully.

Q. What should we feel to be the one thing that should draw our gratitude most perfectly to God?

A. The gift of his Son, Jesus Christ, who came to live and suffer and be reproached and put to death on earth, that he might make us good and happy for ever.

Q. What is the least service we can render to show our gratitude for such mercy?

A. To love our Father in heaven, and keep his commandments.

LESSON XXXVII.

PARABLE OF THE MARRIAGE-FEAST.

Q. Where was Jesus when he uttered the parable of the marriage-feast?

A. He was in Jerusalem, at the great temple, where all the Jews went up to worship. (See Matt. xxi. 23.)

Q. At what time in his life was this ?

A. It was on the same day that he delivered the parable we studied in the last lesson. (See one of the answers in that lesson.)

Q. Where do you find this parable ?

A. In the first fourteen verses of the 22d chapter of Matthew.

Q. What other parable of our Lord that you have studied closely resembles this ?

A. The parable of the great supper, written in Luke xiv. 10-24; although that was probably spoken on a different occasion.

Q. It appears from verses 2 and 3 that a king is spoken of here as having made a marriage, or marriage-feast, for his son; what can you say of such feasts in the time of the Saviour ?

A. Marriage-feasts, among the Jews, and in the time of Christ, were very splendid. Whenever a rich person was married, great preparations were made; costly dishes, with abundant meats and fruits, were provided, and a large number of guests were invited.

Q. How long did these wedding festivals sometimes continue ?

A. Seven days.

Q. It seems, from verse 3, that this king sent *two* invitations to the guests; was this customary ?

A. It was; one was sent a considerable time beforehand; and then, just before the wedding, servants were sent out to call the guests in.

Q. Was it not very kind of this king to send out a third time, when his previous invitation had been scorned ?

A. It was, and it left them no excuse for not coming.

Q. Read verse 4, to see what his message was this time ; what were "fatlings" ?

A. Fatted beasts, killed to furnish meat for the dinner.

Q. Did the persons who were invited pay any attention to this last message ?

A. They did not (see verse 5) ; and some of them were so ungrateful and cruel as to abuse and destroy the servants that brought it.

Q. What is the meaning of "*entreated* them spitefully" ?

A. "*Treated* them spitefully, or maliciously" ; *entreat* does not mean here *beseech*, as with us.

Q. Was it considered as peculiarly insulting, among the Jews, to whom Christ was now speaking, to neglect or refuse to attend a wedding ?

A. It was ; more so than among us.

Q. What did the king do to punish this wickedness ?

A. (See verse 7.)

Q. What did he do next ?

A. (See verses 8 and 9.)

Q. As the invited guests had refused to come, who now had the privilege of attending the feast ?

A. The poor and destitute, strangers and beggars from the highways. (See verse 10.)

- Q.** What was the "wedding-garment," which the man mentioned in verse 11 had not on?
- A.** It was a white robe, which every guest was required to put on before he went in to the feast.
- Q.** When this man was called to account for having come in in his common clothes, without this white robe, why was he "speechless"?
- A.** Because he had no good excuse to offer for doing so.
- Q.** But if these guests were poor people, brought in from the streets, was it not unreasonable to suppose that they had the means of furnishing themselves with such a garment?
- A.** Not at all; for it was the custom of persons who gave such entertainments to provide all who came with these garments, without expense.
- Q.** How do we learn this?
- A.** Travellers and historians who have been well acquainted with the habits of the Jews have told us so in their books. Some rich men had hundreds, or even thousands, of these garments, ready for use in their houses.
- Q.** What reason, then, could this man have had for not putting on such a robe?
- A.** He was either shamefully careless, or else he was willing to disoblige and insult the king, and offend the rest of the company, by appearing in a singular and mean dress.
- Q.** What rule for conduct can you derive from this?

A. That it is best to conform to innocent and harmless customs ; not to try to attract notice ; and to wear such a dress as not to excite remark, either by our carelessness, or by too much nicety, elegance, and display.

Q. What method did the king take to reprove this man's impudence ?

A. He ordered him to be " bound," so that he could not resist, and then to be taken away from the feast.

Q. What is meant when it is said he was to be cast into " outer darkness " ?

A. These feasts were held in the evening, and the man was taken from the bright light of the illuminated apartments into the darkness out of doors.

Q. Why is it said " there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth " ?

A. Because the man would be so disappointed and mortified at being punished and turned out of the feast, that he would weep with rage, and gnash his teeth, as people in anger or in suffering often do. (See Matt. viii. 12.)

Q. Will you state now what the Saviour's object was in relating this story ?

A. To show that many who have had a free opportunity have yet wilfully and wickedly refused to enter into the " kingdom of heaven." (See verse 2.)

Q. When he compares this feast to the " kingdom of heaven," what does he signify ?

- A.** By the "kingdom of heaven," he means that gospel which he preached ; to understand and believe his teachings, and to live as they direct us to live, is to belong to his "kingdom," or his "church," and this is a feast.
- Q.** Is not this a feast much more precious than any other ?
- A.** It ought to be regarded so, for it is a spiritual feast, and it lasts for ever.
- Q.** Who is the "king" that spreads before us every day this feast of virtue and truth ?
- A.** God, who is our Father, and who directs all our lives.
- Q.** Who are the "servants" that God kindly sends to invite us to this feast ?
- A.** Our teachers, for they instruct us in truth and duty ; ministers of the gospel, also, and all who rouse our minds, and encourage us to do well.
- Q.** Who were the first "servants" of God who invited mankind to believe and obey Christian truth ?
- A.** The Apostles and followers of our Lord Jesus Christ himself.
- Q.** To whom did they offer to teach that truth first ?
- A.** To the Jewish nation, to which they themselves belonged.
- Q.** How did these Jews receive the offer ?
- A.** They would not believe the words of these Christian disciples, nor accept Christ's religion ; but they persecuted and put to death those who kindly

attempted to teach them, like the bad men in the parable.

Q. How was verse 7 fulfilled in the case of these Jews?

A. The "armies" of the Romans came, a few years after, and "destroyed" as many as *eleven hundred thousand Jews*, and "burned up their city," — Jerusalem.

Q. Whom are we to understand by those in the "highways," that were afterwards invited to the privileges of Christianity?

A. The men of all other nations, "bad and good," not Jews. (See Acts xiii. 46, 47.)

Q. Are not all of us permitted, and even frequently urged, to follow Christ, and so have that wisdom, and peace, and happiness which religion gives?

A. We are; innumerable things, — accidents and pleasures, the services of the Sabbath, the Bible, and good books, — all remind us of God and duty.

Q. What excuses are we apt to make for not regarding these instructions?

A. We foolishly pretend that we have not time, when we have time; or, more often, we neglect religion because we are too much taken up with worldly thoughts and amusements, as the men in the parable were with their "farms," and their "merchandise."

Q. Is it not extremely dangerous for us to neglect our Christian duties?

A. It is; for if we do, we must expect to suffer the misery and shame of being left in "outer darkness," both here and hereafter.

Q. How can you apply to yourself what is said of the man that had not on "a wedding-garment"?

A. If I pretend to be good, without doing good actions and having really Christian feelings and principles, and the virtues of generosity, and good-temper, and obedience, and devotion, then I cannot be loved by God and Christ, nor can I be admitted to their presence in heaven.

Q. What is the meaning of verse 14?

A. That while all *can* be Christians if we will, yet comparatively few are heartily engaged in being so, as all of us ought to be. (See Matt. vii. 13, 14.)

Q. What, then, ought we all to resolve at once?

A. That we will try more earnestly, and pray more frequently to God, that we may live Christian lives, and do our duty cheerfully.

Q. When is the only safe time to begin this work?

A. Now; for we know not how long we may live, how soon we may die, nor what the future will bring upon us. (See 2 Cor. vi. 2.)

LESSON XXXVIII.

PARABLE OF THE VIRGINS.

Q. Where does it appear that the parable of the virgins must have been spoken by Jesus ?

A. On the Mount of Olives, a height of ground near Jerusalem (see map), whither he retired after delivering the preceding parables in the temple. (See Matt. xxiv. 3.)

Q. Where is it written ?

A. In Matt. xxv. 1 – 12.

Q. What reason have you to suppose that it was a part of the discourse of the Saviour recorded in the previous chapter ?

A. It begins with the word "*Then*," as if it were a continuation of what goes before ; and, besides, the *subject* is the same.

Q. What is that subject ?

A. Jesus is urging on his followers the duty of *watchfulness*, the duty of being *prepared* for a great change. (Matt. xxiv. 42.)

Q. What does he call the whole of his followers, in verse 1 ?

A. The "kingdom of heaven."

Q. What does he compare them to ?

A. To a band of maidens going out to meet the bridegroom at a wedding.

Q. What custom is alluded to here, which prevailed among the Jews ?

A. Their weddings were observed with much parade ; the bridegroom marched to the house of the bride's father, and was met on the way by a procession of young women ; having received the bride at her home, this procession again marched to the bridegroom's house, with music, torches, and great gayety.

Q. Is this custom still kept up in Eastern countries ?

A. It is.

Q. What were the " lamps " ?

A. They resembled torches, and were used to make a brilliant display, — these weddings being held in the night.

Q. Why are a part of these young women who went out to meet the bridegroom said to have been " wise " ?

A. Because, as they did not know the time when the bridegroom would arrive, they had the prudence and forethought to take oil enough to keep their lamps burning (verse 4).

Q. Why were the others " foolish " ?

A. Because they took so little oil that it was burnt out while they were waiting for the bridegroom (verse 3).

Q. As they all waited at a certain point, what happened in consequence of the bridegroom's delay ?

A. They all fell asleep (verse 5).

Q. When, at last, at midnight, the bridegroom approached, what took place ?

A. They awaked, and made ready to receive him (verses 6 and 7).

Q. What did the foolish virgins say to the wise ?

A. (Verse 8.)

Q. What reply was made to them ?

A. (Verse 9.)

Q. How did these careless and foolish virgins learn the folly of not being prepared beforehand ?

A. They returned too late with their oil, and were shut out from the wedding-feast because they were not in the procession (verse 10).

Q. What did they cry out, in their disappointment ?

A. " Lord, Lord," — or " Sir, Sir," — " open to us, and allow us to come in."

Q. What reply did the bridegroom make to them ?

A. " I know you not " ; that is, " I have not seen you in the procession of my friends, and therefore I cannot admit you to the supper."

Q. How does Jesus apply the lesson of this parable to his disciples ?

A. He says, " Watch, therefore, for ye know neither the day nor the hour wherein the Son of Man cometh " (verse 13).

Q. Whom does the Saviour mean by the " Son of Man " ?

A. Himself.

Q. What time does he refer to here, as the "coming of the Son of Man" ?

A. The time when his truth should be more generally believed, and thus his influence established, and his spiritual "kingdom come."

Q. When did that happen ?

A. It began to happen when the Jewish religion was mainly overthrown by the destruction of Jerusalem.

Q. Why then ?

A. Because the Christian religion could not be set up till the Jewish notions were put out of the way, and that happened when the great temple was demolished.

Q. But, if the "coming of the Son of Man" began then, has it not continued since ?

A. It has, because his religion has been spreading farther and farther, and gaining greater control over men's lives.

Q. What "coming of the Saviour" is of the most importance to each one of us ?

A. The coming of his religion, his truth, into our hearts.

Q. When does that happen ?

A. When we feel the truth of his precepts, the holiness of his life, and try to be like him.

Q. Are we not often led to think earnestly of Christ, and of God, and of duty, by misfortunes and afflictions ?

A. We are, for we feel, then, the need of our Heavenly Father to support us, and of religion to comfort us.

Q. How may we regard these solemn events of life, such as sickness, and disappointment, and sorrow?

A. As so many *comings of the Saviour* to our hearts, to remind us of our duty.

Q. How can we make such troubles accomplish their right purpose with us?

A. By growing better, more patient, more virtuous, and more devout, under them?

Q. How can we be prepared for them?

A. By having faith and goodness in our hearts, just as the wise virgins had oil in their lamps.

Q. If we have, how shall we meet all our troubles?

A. Calmly and peacefully.

Q. How shall we be like the "foolish virgins" in the parable?

A. If we have not faith and goodness.

Q. Why?

A. Because then every calamity will find us off our guard, and will overwhelm us with terror and distress.

Q. What is the most solemn of all these events?

A. Death.

Q. What is the only way of being prepared to die?

A. To love and serve God, while I am well and happy.

Q. If you do this, what will your condition be, both in this world and the world to come after death?

- A.** Like that of those who sat down to the wedding-feast in the parable, bright and joyful.
- Q.** But if you are selfish, wicked, worldly, what must your condition be ?
- A.** Dark, cheerless, gloomy ; like that of the foolish virgins, who were not allowed to go in to the feast.
- Q.** What door will be shut against you then ?
- A.** The door of happiness, peace, and spiritual joy, which is the door of heaven.
- Q.** And since you do not know what may happen the next hour, or moment, what is your first duty ?
- A.** To "watch" always ; to be ready *now*. (See 1 Thess. v. 6.)

LESSON XXXIX.

PARABLE OF THE TALENTS.

- Q.** What words, in the opinion of learned men who have studied the Scriptures, should be put in the place of the expression "the kingdom of heaven," in Matt. xxv. 14 ?
- A.** *The Son of Man*, that is, the Saviour.
- Q.** What does Jesus then go on to compare himself to in the parable of the talents ?
- A.** (Verse 14.)
- Q.** What is this man represented as doing, when he leaves home ?

A. (Verses 14 and 15.)

Q. What was his object in this ?

A. He wished his property to be put to a good use and increased during his absence.

Q. How much was a "talent" ?

A. Its exact value in our money is not determined, but it amounted to several hundred dollars.

Q. How did he who received the largest sum in trust deal with it ?

A. (Verse 16.)

Q. And how did he who received the next smaller sum, or two talents, deal with his trust ?

A. (Verse 17.)

Q. What did he who received the smallest sum do ?

A. (Verse 18.)

Q. Will you describe what took place when the master or "lord" came and reckoned with the *first* of these servants ?

A. (Verses 20 and 21.)

Q. What is meant by the expression, "Enter thou into the joy of thy lord" ?

A. "Enter into the enjoyment of the reward which your master will give you for your faithfulness."

Q. What took place when the *second* servant was reckoned with ?

A. (Verses 22 and 23.)

Q. What account did the *third* servant have to give ?

A. (Verse 24.)

Q. What severe sentence does the master pronounce on this idle and unprofitable servant ?

A. (Verses 26 – 30.)

Q. Does the master mean to admit (verse 26) that he was a hard, unfeeling, and unreasonable person, as the servant had accused him of being?

A. He does not ; but only to say, that if this was the servant's opinion, he ought certainly to have been more faithful, and more ready to give account?

Q. What is the meaning of " usury," in verse 27?

A. " Interest " on the money ; or rather the *proceeds* which the money would have brought, if it had been properly invested and employed.

Q. Why was it just that the talent should be taken from this servant, and given to the faithful one?

A. Because the faithful one was most deserving, and had shown that he could turn it to a good use.

Q. What is alluded to in the language of verse 31?

A. The habit of shutting out those who were not admitted to a wedding festival into the darkness out of doors, while there was brightness and merriment within. (See Matt. viii. 12, and xvii. 13.)

Q. What feeling do the terms " weeping and gnashing of teeth " indicate?

A. Shame, disappointment, and grief.

Q. What other parable does this one very much resemble?

A. That of the ten pounds.

Q. In what does this differ from that?

A. In that, the same sum was given to each of the servants ; while in this, the sum in every case is different.

Q. What are we reminded of by this circumstance in this parable of the talents?

A. That every human being has his own peculiar gifts or talents.

Q. Is it probable that any two persons of your acquaintance have precisely the same gifts, or capabilities?

A. It is not.

Q. What was the design of the Creator in producing this variety among his children?

A. To render mankind useful in different ways, so that all important works might be done.

Q. Looking at your companions, what are some of the "talents" that different individuals among them are intrusted with?

A. One has an excellent memory; another, ingenuity; another, a strong and healthy body; another, riches.

Q. What has every one?

A. Something by which he can do good and please God.

Q. By whom are *all* these gifts bestowed upon us?

A. By our Heavenly Father.

Q. What is further taught us in the parable?

A. That for every power or faculty we have, of body or mind, and for every opportunity we enjoy, we shall be called to account by the great Giver, just as the servants were called to reckon with their master.

Q. Does it not appear here, that those who have little property, or leisure, or intellect, are just as really accountable for *what they have*, as those that possess more of these things ?

A. It does.

Q. Shall we be held accountable at last for what was given us at our birth, or only for the use we shall have made of it ?

A. Only for the use we shall have made of it.

Q. What appears from verse 29 ?

A. The more good we do, the more shall we be able to do, and the more shall we love to do it.

Q. What is equally true on the other hand ?

A. The more we indulge ourselves in any kind of sin, the harder will it be to resist temptation.

Q. If this is the case, what ought you to resolve and strive to do ?

A. To resist the beginnings of evil in my mind.

Q. What glorious and animating promise is held out to you in verses 21 and 23 ?

A. I am told that for every little thing in which I am conscientious and dutiful, I shall receive a great reward from my Father in heaven.

Q. But if you are idle and complaining, and do not use every power of doing good, what have you to fear ?

A. The dreadful punishment of the "unprofitable servant."

LESSON XL.

PARABLE OF THE SHEEP AND THE GOATS.

Q. What gives a peculiar interest and solemnity to this parable of the sheep and the goats?

A. It was the last parable uttered by the Saviour, being delivered by him just before his trial and crucifixion.

Q. How is it connected with the passages and parables preceding it?

A. From the verse that introduces it (Matt. xxv. 31) we learn that the subject is the same that was commenced in chapter xxiv., the "coming of the Son of Man."

Q. What have we seen that "coming" to be?

A. The spread of the religion which it was Christ's great object to establish in the world and in the hearts of men.

Q. Is there not great appropriateness, then, in his speaking of "coming *in his glory*"? (verse 31.)

A. There is; for certainly nothing is more beautiful than Christian truth, and nothing more glorious than its triumph over error and sin.

Q. To what does Jesus compare himself in this parable?

A. To a king on a throne (verses 31, 34), assigning to his subjects such rewards as they deserve.

Q. In what sense shall we be judged by Christ ?

A. We shall be judged according to that standard of goodness which Christ has set up ; and hereafter it is very probable that Christ will have a connection with his followers of a spiritual kind, which, in this world, we can hardly comprehend.

Q. What are all the good compared to, in verse 32 ?

A. To sheep.

Q. What are all the bad compared to ?

A. To goats.

Q. Why are the good said to be placed on the right hand of the Saviour in his kingdom, and the bad on the left ? (verse 33.)

A. In the Jewish courts, on the right hand of the judge was a place of honor ; but on the left a place of disgrace.

Q. By whom is Christ appointed thus to exercise judgment ?

A. By God, his Father. (See verse 34, and John v. 22.)

Q. In what touching words does Jesus address those who have been faithful and righteous ?

A. He calls them "ye blessed of my Father."

Q. What does he invite them to come and enjoy ?

A. The peace and purity and all the happy employments of the heavenly life, which were prepared and intended for them from the beginning of things (verse 34).

Q. What actions are mentioned as having been per-

formed by these righteous and faithful persons, which brought them their glorious reward?

A. (Verses 35, 36.)

Q. But as Jesus is not among us in a mortal form, how can *we* perform similar good actions, and gain his approbation?

A. The gospel teaches us that if we do good deeds, — deeds of benevolence, kindness, and piety, — from a love of pleasing God, and with a hearty desire to imitate Jesus, this will give us acceptance before them.

Q. What, then, should we do now?

A. We should look around to find those who need our sympathy and assistance, and feed the hungry, be kind to strangers, clothe the destitute, visit the sick, and pity the prisoner.

Q. If we do this with a truly Christian feeling, how will it be regarded?

A. We shall be blessed for it, as if it were a service rendered directly to Jesus on earth.

Q. What is the import of verses 37 and 38?

A. These real friends of the Saviour are represented as disclaiming any merit, and as being surprised that their good deeds should be mentioned.

Q. What do we call this feeling?

A. Humility, or an humble opinion of one's own character and deserts.

Q. Must not every real Christian feel that after all he is very deficient, and has done far less than he

ought to do, when he remembers what God and his Saviour have done for him ?

A. He must ; and his humility will increase as his goodness increases.

Q. How is it made plain that we serve and please our great Master, when we do good to mankind ?

A. (See verse 40.)

Q. Whom does the pure and holy Jesus condescend to call his " brethren " ?

A. The whole human family ; even ~~we~~ are the objects of his tender and affectionate regard.

Q. What fearful sentence is pronounced on the wicked, or those on the left hand ?

A. (Verse 41.)

Q. What are the wicked then to dread ?

A. Banishment from the happy society of the good, into the spiritual darkness, gloom, heaviness of heart, where all evil and corrupt spirits dwell in unspeakable misery.

Q. On whom must this sad punishment fall ?

A. On those whose character is just opposite to the good characters which were approved ; on those who did *not* what the others performed. (See verses 42, 43.)

Q. How does the contrast between these two classes, the good and the evil, come out yet more clearly in verse 44 ?

A. The evil are proud, and pretend that they *have* done their duty ; while the good, who *have* really done it, feel ashamed of their shortcomings.

Q. But is there any such thing as deceiving the Great Judge ?

A. We can never deceive him, for he knows all the secrets of our hearts, and his piercing eye beholds all the actions of our lives.

Q. What answer, then, must the sinful receive ?

A. They must be told that whenever they are unfaithful to any duty, — whenever they are selfish, sensual, passionate, or profane, — they do directly offend against the pure spirit of God, and against Jesus Christ, as much as if his bodily form were before their eyes at the moment (verse 45).

Q. How is the whole parable concluded ?

A. (Verse 46.)

Q. What, then, is the portion of the wicked ?

A. Spiritual wretchedness inconceivable, and of indefinite duration.

Q. What is the portion of the righteous ?

A. Spiritual joy, life, peace, deeper and higher than we can now fully understand.

Q. When did these judgments, indicated in this parable, begin to be executed ?

A. Immediately after the time of Christ, and especially at the destruction of the Jewish nation, when the unrighteous were severely punished.

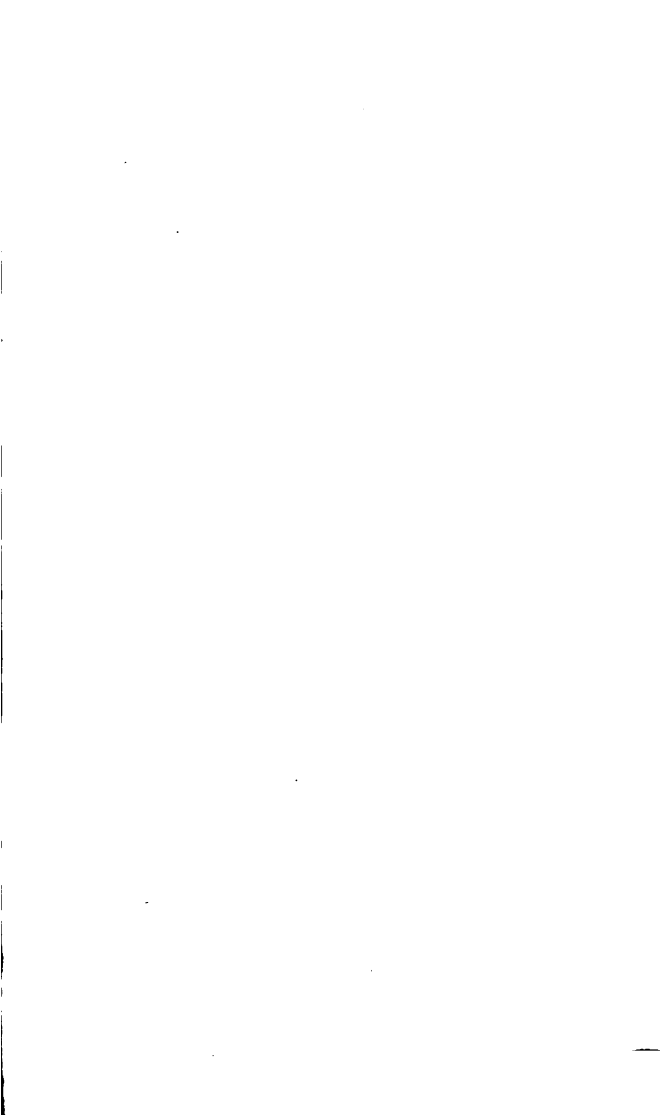
Q. How long will these judgments continue to go on ?

A. As long as we continue to be conscious and responsible beings ; that is, for ever.

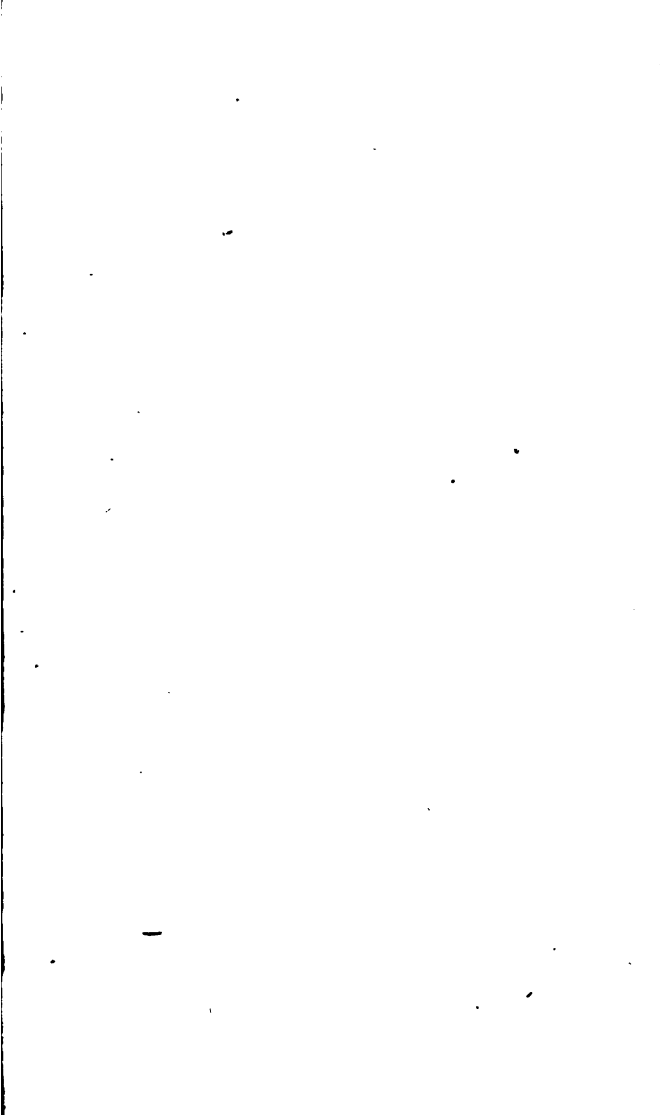
Q. Where, then, is the only way of safety, as well as our highest and most precious privilege?

A. In repenting of our sins, in living virtuous and religious lives, and in trusting to our Heavenly Father for that forgiveness which he has promised to all them that love him.

THE END.











~~JUN 1 1991~~

